



신의 노래

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Chapter 125

On the way back to the hotel, Coline was looking at the sidewalk with his head down when he spoke cautiously,

“Jun, what did you talk about with Alex Zakin?”

“The glory of the past.”

“Glory?”

“Yeah. More than that, do well with the recording tomorrow. Alex hasn’t decided on whether or not he’s going to release a record with Violon yet. He’ll decide once he sees what happens tomorrow. Do a good job.”

“What are you talking about? Aren’t you coming with us?”

“Ili is going to do the producing himself tomorrow. I can’t tell if he has a lot of expectations for you or if he’s trying to find your shortcomings.”

“Then what about you?”

Coline’s face became dark as soon as Jun Hyuk said that he would not be producing for them.

“Me? I’m going to get \$25,000. I need to do that much work.”

“What are you going to be doing?”

“I don’t know either. I’ll find out once I get there tomorrow. Alex told me to look forward to it, but I can’t even guess.”

Everyone left their instruments at the hotel and went to the Santa Monica beach. They were going to each dinner while looking out at the wide and open sea in order to let go of their tension. It would not do any good to worry, and they need to rest comfortably at least today.

Jun Hyuk and his party went to the cafeteria on Santa Monica beach and ate burgers for dinner with beer.

There were a lot of women who would join them if they offered, but they only ate. Coline's eyes flit back and forth, and he dragged everyone back to the hotel. They need to get plenty of sleep to be in the best condition.

Jun Hyuk's first night in LA was tame.



Violon's recording at 1 in the afternoon started with conducting by Ili Gotez. His image of complaining in New York was gone and he showed the sharp ears he has as a famous producer.

Stop. Hey, the guitar tone is high! I told you to bring it down a little.

Hey! Drums. Are you going to break the cymbals? You know how much those cost? You can't play them a little more gently and lightly?

Coline. Are you joking with me right now? If it's hard to play together, record separate tracks. Our engineers are the best at mixing in the world. Of course recording separately would be evidence that you don't have the skill to be a band?

Coline and the band members realized how kindly and precisely Jun Hyuk had done their directing. He gave an exact number like 1.3 when matching the tone, and he would demonstrate things like the drum cymbals himself. When the entire sound was off, he even had the subtlety to point out where the issues were by part.

In the world of professionals however, they need to catch what the producers are asking for on their own. They need to understand what the producers are saying to become professionals at the same level.

Jun Hyuk said that they would work on one song a day, five songs over five days, but it was looking like Ili would work on one song over five days.

"Alex, what am I working on?"

Jun Hyuk entered Alex Zakin's recording studio. Two sound engineers were sitting in

front of the console box, inspecting the equipment.

“Try directing one song today. This song alone is worth \$25,000. Do it well because if you don’t, I’m going to charge claims.”

Alex Zakin winked and seemed ready to watch a fun show. The fun show appeared when the door opened and a musician entered with cigarette smoke.

Jun Hyuk did not recognize the black man in glasses who was shaking hands with Alex Zakin. Foreigners all look similar to him. And it was common for album covers to have irrelevant pictures instead of the performer’s face.

“Jun, you don’t recognize him? Say hello. This is Stanley Clarke. Clarke, this is the producer who’s going to kick your ass today. His name is Jun.”

The kind-looking man who Alex Zakin introduced held out a hand, but Jun Hyuk was standing dumbfounded ever since he heard the name Stanley Clarke.

Stanley Clarke, a fusion jazz great who has not stopped his activities from the 70s until now.

Born in 1951 Philadelphia, he is a bassist known as the starting point for existing electric bass techniques. He learned to play the violin when he was young but he took up the electric bass as he became a high school student. Since his 20s, he began to create his own world of music with the jazz greats.

His powerful performances are contemporary jazz achievements that made the bass into an instrument of melody instead of rhythm.

Jun Hyuk looked so out of his mind that it seemed he did not believe the reality that he was looking at the real Stanley Clarke.

“Hey, what are you doing? I heard Asians are polite... You’re just looking at the hand this old man’s holding out?”

“Old man? I can’t forgive that even from you.”

Jun Hyuk finally came back to his senses after hearing the two men joke around, and quickly grabbed Stanley Clarke’s hand.

“It’s an honor, Mr. Clarke. I just couldn’t believe it.....”

Stanley Clarke could not know it, but he might as well be a teacher to Jun Hyuk. Stanley Clarke, Jaco Pastorius, and Victor Wooten. He had taught himself to play the bass guitar while listening to the music of these three eminent bassists. The music that they recorded 40 years ago left over time to team a young boy in Korea.

“Well, well. Isn’t this too polite? Just call me Stanley.”

Jun Hyuk could not hide his excitement and explained that he practiced the bass while listening to Stanley Clarke’s music and that he is basically a teacher to him. When his excitement abated, Stanley Clarke laughed in good spirits.

“Ha ha. I heard you play, and it can’t be compared to me in my teens. You didn’t learn, you referenced.”

“There there. Stop the cheesy compliments and let’s get to work.”

To Alex’s words to start working, Stanley Clarke frowned and Jun Hyuk blinked.

“But what do you mean by work?”

“What would it be? Since a musician came to a recording studio, it’ll be recording. You’re directing Stanley’s performance today. Do well because it’s a 6-minute song.”

“Excuse me? Are you saying the song we’re recording today is.....?”

“Why? You don’t think you can do it?”

“That’s not it. It’s just how could I do Stanley’s.....”

Jun Hyuk waved the notion away. If he been told to direct Beyonce’s music, he would have been able to accept it with confidence. Stanley Clarke is one of the musicians that Jun Hyuk respects.

The frowning Stanley Clarke lit a cigarette again and spoke,

“It’s okay, Jun. I already heard the music you recorded. I think your skills will be much better than that of reckless Alex over here.”

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There was a reason why Stanley Clarke looked uncomfortable. Last month, he had prepared a project album with Japanese pianist, Uehara. He returned after recording all 4 songs in Japan when Uehara pulled the brakes.

“What? What do you mean you’re pulling the brakes?”

“He’s saying he isn’t satisfied with one of the songs. He sent back what he played last week.”

“Just the piano part?”

“Yeah. I’m sure you know, but improv on scene is important in jazz... Mr. Uehara likes sophisticated things.”

Alex looked over Stanley Clarke.

“Actually, Stanley is really annoyed because of that. We barely got him to agree to this because he was angry that they’re not even recording together and that he’ll have to re-record while listening to the piano as a music file. Honestly, the piano version that was redone is much better. I would like to use this piano song.”

“Is there a recording of what Stanley played again?”

“We have that... but there isn’t anything that was done properly. We stopped all of them as he was playing.”

“Then I guess we’ll have to start by listening to the piano.”

Jun Hyuk put on the headphones and began listening to the piano. His fingers naturally tapped his knees according to the melody. He took off the headphones,

“Alright, I’m done. The song is good.”

“See, Stanley? I’m telling you the piano is good.”

Alex looked at Stanley Clarke as he spoke, but Stanley still had a frown.

“In short, he’s saying that it’s a jazz performance but there isn’t any hype, right?”

“Right. This kid knows something. It has to have a good feeling to perform it.”

“Then let’s bring out its feeling first. It’s lacking, but I’ll play the piano.”

As soon as Jun Hyuk entered the recording booth, Alex Zakin’s gaze changed. It is time to see for himself.

Jun Hyuk put his hands on the electric piano and played the piano by Uehara he had just heard. A gentle melody fitting for fusion jazz filled the booth. It is a song that brought out the Japanese characteristic of piano with a tranquil emotion.

Stanley Clarke looked back and forth between Jun Hyuk in the booth and Alex sitting beside him, and stuttered,

“Di... Didn’t he just hear it? By... By chance...”

“No, you saw. He put on the headphones and listened to it just now. That’s the first time. This... Seeing something I’d only heard of with my own eyes, it seems like magic.”

“Something you’d only heard of?”

“That he’s someone like Mozart. I can’t believe it.”

The two men had a more blank expression than when Jun Hyuk first met Stanley Clarke. Jun Hyuk lifted his head and spoke to Stanley Clarke,

“Stanley, play it with me. Hurry up and come in.”

Stanley Clarke entered the recording booth and picked up the bass guitar.

“Record everything from now on. Don’t stop it anywhere and keep recording until they both come out of the booth. Got it?”

Alex Zakin warned the sound engineer and began to watch the two.

Jun Hyuk played Uehara’s piano in repetition so that Stanley Clarke could play the bass

with it. They played it three times and each time, Stanley's bass brought out a different melody.

Jun Hyuk began to change the piano melody little by little when Stanley gave him the eye. Stanley's bass started to give an entirely different melody as he matched Jun Hyuk's piano.

Two wave tracks on the monitor outside the recording booth were dancing. Melodies were filling the computer hard drive through the thick copper wires running from the bass guitar and electric piano.

Alex Zakin felt a deep bliss. This is an improv performance coming from a small recording booth that is not even 400 square feet, that can only be heard at the likes of the Monterey Jazz Festival. On top of that, the entire sound is being recorded without any noise mixed in.

"This is why I can't help but love geniuses!"

The excited Alex Zakin shouted as he patted the two sound engineers on the back. Directing? Producing? They do not need this kind of stuff. When two geniuses meet and sparks fly, there are unexpected results.

Those results become incredible music that no famous producer can bring out.

Jun Hyuk's vision faded until he could not see anything. He could not see Stanley playing the bass or his fingers pressing the keyboard. He could only see the wavelengths created light fireworks from the sound of the piano and bass colliding.

Stanley Clarke did not even realize when his glasses fell off of his face because he was shaking his head so much. He could not feel the saliva forming in his slightly open mouth. They were both lost in the music that they were creating together.

They performed for over almost an hour before they stopped.

Even though he was sitting still and not playing the piano, his fingertips tingled and there was a tremor throughout his body. He had played jazz properly for the first time after only having listened to it.

This is the first time he is feeling something like this. He found out that the bliss felt by someone listening to jazz is incomparable to what the performer feels.

Stanley Clarke put the bass down and hugged Jun Hyuk who was sitting blankly.

“If I’m asked to choose my best performances, this will be in the top three.”

They did not know that Alex and the engineers outside the booth were clapping endlessly.

Jun Hyuk and Stanley Clarke did not leave the booth because they were talking about music. Alex Zakin checked the recording as Jun Hyuk even showed his happiness by taking a picture with Stanley on his phone.

“How many minutes is the entire thing?”

“Playing to Uehara’s piano is 20 minutes. The rest is 48.”

Alex Zakin got lost in thought for a moment after checking the amount recorded.

“Then it means Stanley played the song to go with Mr. Uehara’s piano three times?”

“Yes. Which one should we use?”

“First combine each with the piano file that Uehara sent over. We can use the best of those... Or we can use all three. Oh right, try mixing Jun Hyuk’s piano too so we can compare it.”

Three versions of a song where only the bass is different. Shoving all of them into one album is something that jazz manias would like, but it is better to separate them for the sales of Stanley’s next record release.

“What are you going to do with the 48 minutes?”

“Why are you asking? We need to release a record of course. This is good enough to get a Grammy for Best Jazz Instrumental Album.”

Alex Zakin’s words were full of certainty.

The \$25,000 contract with Jun Hyuk had come back as 48 minutes worth \$2.5 million. It could even be \$25 million. Alex Zakin would need to receive permission from the two leading men of the record, but he was decided on releasing it.

He suddenly thought of something and came out of the recording studio, leaving the two behind.

“When they’re done, send them to my room.”

Alex Zakin quickly went up to his room. When he saw the secretary sitting in front of his office, he spoke quickly,

“Call Charlie and tell him to hurry up and come to my room.”

“Charlie?”

“I’m talking about Charlie Dwayne! Quickly within a minute.”

Alex sat back in his chair, but he kept shaking his leg. He had only met Jun Hyuk twice, but this is the first time that he is meeting someone who surpasses surprise and shocks him every time they meet.

He could not tell where Jun Hyuk’s talents ended. He thought of the existing jazz performers who could maintain a performance with Stanley Clarke for 50 minutes, but could not even come up with 10. Even if there is musical inspiration, there needs to be solid playing skills to support it. It would be fitting to call him a master already because he is able to take the inspiration in his mind and express it with an instrument on the spot.

Chapter 127

While his mind was busy with thoughts, the door opened.

“What’s going on that your secretary is making a fuss? What is it?”

Charlie Dwayne is the Senior Director of LA Sound, dealing with the real business aspect of the company. He had come running because the secretary made such a fuss.

“There’s a super rookie. He’s an alien.”

“Really?”

Charlie Dwayne could tell from Alex Zakin’s expression that he had discovered a big fish.

“Quickly write up a contract and bring it to me. We need to get him before he leaves.”

“The conditions?”

“1st grade.”

“He’s that good?”

He was certain he had heard Alex say that it is a rookie, but he is asking for a 1st grade contract. In the 15 years he had worked at LA Sound, there was only one time where he made a 1st grade contract for a rookie.

Though he only released one album before dying in a car crash, it accumulated over 20 million sales until now.

“I met him for the first time yesterday. Today’s the second time, and we already got two albums out of him. Even 1st grade is too low. If there are better conditions, you have to put them in the contract.”

“What? Are you being serious? Or are you joking? What do you mean he made an album a day?”

“It’s true. If I could, I would lock him in the recording studio. Stop wasting time and write up the contract. I don’t know when he’ll leave.”

Charlie Dwayne did not need to think about the type of music it was. Alex had said two albums, not two songs. If he said two albums, it indicated music that could top the charts.

“Okay. I’ll get it ready right away.”

Once Charlie Dwayne left, Alex Zakin paced his office imagining different situations. Should they create a band with Jun Hyuk in the lead? Or should they make an album with multiple bands that Jun Hyuk guest performs with? Should they try making a bunch of albums as a one-man band?

However, his happy thoughts quickly ended. He remembered that Jun Hyuk is a student at CH School of Music. The path of a maestro and the path of a star. He did not yet know which path Jun Hyuk wants to take. Whatever path, he was sure that there would be the day when Jun Hyuk earns the title of a Grammy Award winner.

Currently, the person with the most Grammys is not Michael Jackson or Madonna. It is 31 awards for Sir Georg Solti who is called the maestro of the century. Following behind him is renowned producer Quincy Jones with 27 awards.

When his secretary delivered an envelope with the contract, Jun Hyuk entered Alex’s office with the sound engineer.

“Where is Stanley?”

“He’s with his manager.”

“Okay. You did well today.”

When the sound engineer left, Alex spoke while watching Jun Hyuk’s bright expression,

“Jun, what did you think about performing with Stanley? Killer, huh?”

“He he. Yes. It was the best. I don’t know how he brings out that kind of rhythm.....”

Jun Hyuk gave a thumbs up.

“We even exchanged phone numbers. He said that he would make sure to call me if he comes to New York.”

“Great, since his life consists of touring all year. You guys will get to meet again soon.”

For a moment, Alex Zakin imagined Jun Hyuk standing on stage with Stanley Clarke. The citizens of New York would be surprised.

“Jun, I enjoyed that incredible moment today... Will you do me a favor?”

Jun Hyuk hesitated because he was not sure what Alex would say, but Alex did not care. It is not an excessive favor.

“Hurry up and select an representative. I’d like to make an album with today’s performance as soon as possible.”

“Ah!”

“As I said, I don’t want to and can’t talk money with you. I’m too impatient of a person to keep today’s performance under wraps.”

“Okay. I’ll do that.”

“And... when you meet a good business partner, show this to them.”

Alex handed over a manila envelope embellished with a large LA Sound logo.

“What is this?”

“A contract.”

“Excuse me? Didn’t you say you would make the contract later?”

“Of course. We’re going to take care of the CD you gave me yesterday and today’s performance separately. This contract is just a general contract. It’s about how many albums you’ll release with LA Sound going forward. It’s mostly blank. You can fill it in with whatever you want. Your representative will know the details.”

Jun Hyuk just touched the envelope because he did not know what it meant.

“Just keep one thing in mind for me. The conditions of this contract are only offered to superstars who have an accumulated record sales exceeding 30 million copies.”

“30 million copies?”

“Yeah. I’m positive that you’re going to exceed that.”

A contract with great conditions and recognition of his talent. Jun Hyuk packed the envelope.

“I understand. Whoever my partner is, I’ll be sure to tell them.”

“Good. Then you’re done with work here? What are you going to do?”

Once Alex Zakin saw Jun Hyuk pack the contract, he relaxed.

“Ah, I have to go to Japan.”

“Japan?”

“Yes. I have some personal plans. But.....”

“Go ahead. Tell me.”

Jun Hyuk hesitated because he could be getting involved unnecessarily.

“What’s going to happen to Coline?”

“Well, Coline is now under Ili’s jurisdiction. Why? Are you worried about him because he’s your friend?”

“A little. I agreed to do the producing... but I feel a bit bad.”

“Don’t worry. Coline has plenty of potential. What’s left is how strong their will is. If they give up because it’s hard, it’s over. If they grit their teeth and make the effort, they’ll succeed.”

“I see.”

Jun Hyuk got up from his seat and bowed with all sincerity to Alex Zakin.

“Thank you, Alex. I had an unforgettable experience thanks you to.”

“Stop that. That’s what I should be saying to you. The performance you two put on was the best gift for me as a fan of jazz, not as a producer.”

Alex Zakin hugged Jun Hyuk who had his head bowed.



As soon as Jun Hyuk got back to the hotel, he made a call to Korea. He told them that his work in LA ended earlier, so he would get on a plane to Japan the next day, and packed his bags.

Coline and the band did not come back until midnight. Ili had worked them so rigorously that they collapsed on their beds and could not get up.

Jun Hyuk called Coline and went down to the lounge in the hotel lobby.

“Jun, what’s up?”

Coline started to get nervous when he saw Jun Hyuk’s serious face.

“Um... I wanted to tell you what Alex Zakin said today.”

Jun Hyuk repeated Alex Zakin’s evaluation of Coline verbatim, without any exaggeration.

“It means that we’re at a point where I have to make a choice.”

Jun Hyuk did not feel the need to say anything. Coline’s expression was already speaking for him.

The top producer leading the top record label in America said that he could succeed if he put in the effort. Coline did not start with such a light heart that he would hesitate here.

“Thanks, Jun. I was able to get here because of you. I won’t ever forget it.”

Coline held Jun Hyuk’s hand tightly for a long time.

Chapter 128

When Jun Hyuk arrived at Tokyo Haneda Airport, Yoon Kwang Hun was waiting with both arms spread wide.

“This kid. You have the essence of an adult now. Boys grow up faster once they become independent and live alone.”

“I was already grown up. You’re exaggerating.”

Yoon Kwang Hun was seeing Jun Hyuk again after only 5 months. He was surprised by how much Jun Hyuk had changed, but did not show it. He was most pleased that Jun Hyuk had gained confidence. His worries that Jun Hyuk might be suffering alone in a far away country disappeared.

He could also guess why Jun Hyuk seemed to have matured.

“Hey! I’m saying you have the essence of an adult because you have a girl. What do you mean exaggerating.”

“What?”

Jun Hyuk was pushing his cart when he stopped in his tracks. Yoon Kwang Hun knew exactly what he had been up to all the way from Korea!

“How did you know?”

“If you look at the songs you write recently... Well, they’re so bright. I almost cringed. When did it start?”

Had he made it that obvious? Jun Hyuk’s face was already so red it looked like it would explode.

“At the start of winter.”

When Jun Hyuk responded with embarrassment, Yoon Kwang Hun laughed,

“He he. You didn’t come back to Korea during the break because of that girl?”

“Oh, no that’s not it. She went back to Argentina.”

Jun Hyuk waved both hands to tell him not to misunderstand. Yoon Kwang Hun grinned from ear to ear when he said Argentina.

“What? Argentina? She’s Latino?”

“Yes.”

“Is she pretty?”

Yoon Kwang Hun teased him and Jun Hyuk was no longer embarrassed.

“Of course. Do you want to see a picture?”

Jun Hyuk took out his phone and showed him a picture of Amelia. Yoon Kwang Hun saw a few pictures saved on the phone and grumbled for no reason,

“Hmph, I’m jealous. She’s really pretty!”

“He he.”

“What’s her name?”

“Amelia. Amelia Lamarque.”

“Amelia... Even her name is pretty.”

Yoon Kwang Hun and Jun Hyuk had tons to talk about, but they had to stop because of the person standing awkwardly next to Yoon Kwang Hun.

“Ah, say hi. He’s a supervisor at the company that’s distributing your album in Japan right now. He speaks Korean well because he works with the Korean end.”

“Ah, hello.”

“Mr. Jun Hyuk. We finally get to meet. I’ve really waited a long time.”

Jun Hyuk was not even surprised when he heard his tight schedule for the next week in the car to the hotel. It was lenient compared to a day at CH School of Music.



Jo Hyung Joong and Baek Seung Ho were waiting at the hotel. They could not hide their surprise at Jun Hyuk's matured image either.

"But it looks like Teacher Yoon Jung Su isn't coming?"

"This overlapped with his schedule for entertainment show appearances. Once you go after your promotions, he's going to make a round with the kids."

"The kids?"

"Yeah. The guest singers. Hye Sung, Na Rae, Hae Jun, and Nam Seung Hee. They're all benefiting from this because of you since they were able to get a foot in to this Hallyu wave."

Jo Hyung Joong felt sorry. Beyond the monetary issues, he could not help but feel that the star Jun Hyuk was being forced to share his rising popularity in Japan with other people.

In the most extreme example, Lee Hae Jun started activities in Japan with his idol group and the song he participated in for Jun Hyuk's album is most popular among Japanese fans.

When Yoon Kwang Hun told everyone about Amelia as they ate dinner at the hotel restaurant, Baek Seung Ho was most delighted.

"This kid. What were you talking about when you were busy dating instead of studying? You said you had a lot of work to get done?"

Baek Seung Ho and Jo Hyung Joong looked at the picture of Amelia on Jun Hyuk's phone and admired her beauty.

"I'm telling you I'm really studying. And this girl is an incredible pianist too. She's known as the 2nd Martha Argerich in Argentina."

“Hey! Tell me honestly. Did you fall for her because of her piano? Or because she’s pretty?”

“Well... it was both.”

“Since Jun Hyuk is handsome too, don’t you think this girl Amelia might be dating him because of his looks? Ha ha.”

Jo Hyung Joong spoke while looking at a photo of the two of them together, but Jun Hyuk shook his head.

“Oy, Teacher. You don’t know what you’re saying. In America, I’m just a tall and skinny Asian kid. Western girls like manly Asians.”

“Good. Let’s just say the two of you fell for each other because of your music.”

Jun Hyuk started happily telling them about what happened over a semester at school and in LA. When he said that Philadelphia Philharmonic’s maestro, Bruno Kazel, recognized his talent and that he played improv with Stanley Clarke, Yoon Kwang Hun and Jo Hyung Joong looked like they were going to pass out.

“Philadelphia’s maestro said that you’re the future conductor of the New York Philharmonic?”

“The real Stanley Clarke? The Stanley Clarke that we know?”

“You can’t believe it, can you? Ha ha. I still feel like it’s a dream. Look at this. We even took a picture together.”

When Jun Hyuk showed them his pictures with the two greats on his phone, Yoon Kwang Hun and Jo Hyung Joong showed more excitement than when they saw Amelia’s picture. Only Baek Seung Ho did not know what they were talking about and just blinked.

“Who is that old black man that you’re making such a fuss?”

“Ignorant bastard. All you have to know is that he’s incredible.”

While Yoon Kwang Hun made fun of Baek Seung Ho, Jun Hyuk handed over the contract that Alex Zakin had given him.

“Please take a look at this for me. It’s the contract LA Sound gave me.”

Yoon Kwang Hun read through the contract slowly.

“I don’t think this has anything to do with what you recorded. It’s about the albums you’ll be recording from now on.”

“Oh, yeah. He said that we need to make a different contract for that... He said this is a general contract. I read it too and I don’t think it looks bad.”

Yoon Kwang Hun does not know the basics of the entertainment industry, so he explained the contents simply to Jo Hyung Joong.

“So LA Sound wants to contract a certain number of records. They’ll pay an advance royalty of \$1 million for each record. Of course it doesn’t mean that if he agrees to do 10 albums that he’ll get the entire amount at once, but he’ll get the advance royalties each time he completes an album for the next album.”

“So whatever amount he chooses for the albums he’ll release with them, they’re going to give him advance royalties of \$1 million for the first album.”

“Yes.”

“Oh right. He told me to tell you that even in America, these kinds of conditions are only applicable to the top stars.”

Jun Hyuk did not forget the last thing that Alex Zakin said.

“That’s right. You need to be a star with the ticket power to sell out for a world tour at one time to get \$1 million.”

Jo Hyung Joong had already been expecting to some extent when he heard that Jun Hyuk had performed with Stanley Clarke. But once he knew what was included in the contract, he realized that Jun Hyuk was holding the card to become a superstar at any time.

“And the online profit share is also really generous... It seems LA Sound doesn’t want to lose you.”

Jo Hyung Joong’s concern just now that Jun Hyuk had missed out on an opportunity in

Japan became laughable.

“Well... It seems we made him come to Japan for nothing.”

Jo Hyung Joong poured a drink for Yoon Kwang Hun and spoke.

“Excuse me?”

“I don’t think promoting Jun Hyuk’s debut album here is the issue. The second Jun Hyuk signs on with LA Sound, he is basically reserving a spot as a world star.”

Everyone became speechless. This is an opportunity that is hard to come by in a lifetime for the average person, but it came to Jun Hyuk in a matter of a semester. The Maestro’s recognition. And an unconventional proposal from a worldwide record label.

Chapter 129

He now needs to decide what he will do with this opportunity, but no one could speak easily because everyone had their own thoughts on the matter. Jun Hyuk examined the three men's expressions and broke the heavy silence,

"Can I say something?"

"Sure since it's your issue. Say it."

Jun Hyuk took the contract from the table and ripped it.

"This way, there's nothing to think about."

Everyone looked shocked at Jun Hyuk's unexpected behavior. The contract ripped to pieces looked to them like a check for \$1 million and it looked like the mark of a world star. It had become a piece of paper that clearly showed Jun Hyuk's position on the issue.

Yoon Kwang Hun came out of shock first and spoke as he laughed,

"Yeah. I guess that makes it simple. Alright... Our food is getting cold. Let's eat."

Yoon Kwang Hun knew that he did not have to worry about Jun Hyuk anymore. He is still a bit immature, but he has plenty of volition in deciding his own future.

"Wait. There's still something we need to take care of. The music you played with that old black man. And the 10 songs that Jun Hyuk said he made. What are you going to do about that?"

Baek Seung Ho brought up the issues that had not yet been resolved yet.

"It means that you need an agent or representative... And you never know. In my opinion, I think things like this are going to keep happening. Whether Jun Hyuk wants it or not. Don't you think so?"

This was again not something that Jun Hyuk had planned. He had just started by trying

to help a friend, but it had become a bigger issue.

“And if you look at Jun Hyuk, he pretends to be cool but he’s actually really weak when it comes to friends. He can’t reject when someone he’s a little close to comes with a favor.”

Jun Hyuk felt guilty while eating and started coughing, and Yoon Kwang Hun took Jun Hyuk’s side,

“Hey! Everyone’s like that. We’re all just taking care of each other and helping each other.”

“Who said it’s a bad thing? I’m saying you need to take action in advance so Jun Hyuk doesn’t have to worry about stuff like this.”

“Truthfully, there are a lot of great agencies on this side of the industry as well. Companies like Boras Corporation of American major league Scott Boras.”

Jo Hyung Joong quietly jumped in while Yoon Kwang Hun and Baek Seung Ho were arguing.

“If a famous producer like LA Sound’s Alex Zakin says one word about Jun Hyuk to the industry people, everyone’s going to come to Jun Hyuk with a contract. But.....”

Jo Hyung Joong took a slight look at Yoon Kwang Hun’s face. He wanted to see if they were thinking the same thing.

“That kind of company won’t be satisfied with letting Jun Hyuk do what he wants like a hobby. They’ll somehow get him to dedicate all of his time to releasing albums or touring.”

“Are you saying that they’ll put forth unreasonable conditions?”

Baek Seung Ho frowned.

“No. Since those people are smart professionals, they’ll know that callous tactics like that won’t work. They’ll probably bait Jun Hyuk with something he likes.”

“Bait?”

Jo Hyung Joong threw what he thought was bait at Jun Hyuk,

“Jun Hyuk. What would you do if I said that you could release an album with musicians like John Mayer, Adele, Metallica, U2, and Stevie Wonder?”

“Huh? That...”

Even Jo Hyung Joong was surprised by how easily Jun Hyuk took the bait.

“See? They’ll throw this kind of bait. Like Stanley Clarke. Then he’ll have to quit CH School of Music.”

“So you’re saying that we need someone like Jerry Maguire?”

“Yes, exactly.”

Movie Jerry Maguire starring Tom Cruise. Protagonist Jerry Maguire becomes angry that stars at a large agency are only seen to be worth money. He is fired from the company and it is a story about how he forms bonds with the only client who will stay with him, a soccer player, and becomes successful.

The agent Jun Hyuk needs is this kind of person.

“Do you think there’s a person like Jerry Maguire out there?”

“Not an agent, but there is a lawyer. You know Baek Jung Hun, the actor, right?”

“Yes.”

“When he appeared in a Hollywood film, he had a Korean lawyer who took care of him like he was his manager. He apparently took care of Baek Jung Hun like family during the filming. He brought homemade kimchi for him and even had black goat airlifted for him to take care of his health. I heard that he’s good very good at his job as well of course.”

Yoon Kwang Hun realized the attraction of the lawyer Jo Hyung Joong spoke of,

“So you’re saying he did it case by case instead of having an exclusive contract with an agent.....”

“That’s right. Baek Seung Hun only selected him as his representative for that movie. He does live in New York as well... Should I try contacting him?”

“If you’d go to those lengths for us, we’d be grateful.”

“Of course. Jun Hyuk is special to me as well. Ha ha.”



When Jun Hyuk and Yoon Kwang Hun returned to their room, they sat together leaning against the twin beds.

“Sir. How is the cafe doing?”

“I can breathe a bit these days. It was like death until the fall.”

Yoon Kwang Hun shook his head, not even wanting to think about it.

“Oh, I guess business is doing well now.”

“No. The opposite.”

“What?”

“Until the fall, there were a lot of people who came because they’re your fans, but they don’t come anymore. It’s much more comfortable now that I only have to deal with the regulars who come to really enjoy music at a music cafe. You’ve already been forgotten in Korea. He he.”

Jun Hyuk smiled at Yoon Kwang Hun’s joke. He only needs for the people who are important to him to remember him. Yono Kwang Hun saw Jun Hyuk smile and said what he had not been able to at dinner,

“That’s that but why did you tear the contract? It could be a good opportunity.”

“Because of what Teacher Jo Hyung Joong said. If I really did get the opportunity to collaborate with stars like that, I had a feeling that I would quit school.”

Jun Hyuk spoke with indifference as though he did not regret it in the least.

“I guess you like school? No. It’s because of Amelia, isn’t it?”

“No. There’s still a lot I need to do at school.”

“You have a lot to do?”

“Yes. I came to realize a lot of things while writing a piano concerto for Amelia.”

“Like what?”

“About what my piano is.”

Yoon Kwang Hun put down the can of beer that he was about to drink. Jun Hyuk was talking about his piano, something he had never revealed or been the first to bring up. Yoon Kwang Hun knew what this meant.

Chapter 130

"I emphasized pianissimo to reduce Amelia's strength... but once I explode, I don't know what moderation is."

"But you're able to direct pianissimo and fortissimo however you'd like."

"Well that's not mine. You know that's just the reproduction of other pianists."

"So? Do you now want to properly express your bloody rage?"

Jun Hyuk looked at Yoon Kwang Hun with surprise. How could it be that there is nothing he does not know? Jun Hyuk's face suddenly turned red.

"You knew?"

"Yeah. I've heard it just once before."

Yoon Kwang Hun recalled Jun Hyuk's moonlight sonata. His face became calm again.

"I see. Well... I'm sure you know what I'm going to say since you've heard it."

He has matured quite a lot. He is able to speak calmly about the anger inside him that he had so concealed. Yoon Kwang Hun had the thought that sending Jun Hyuk to study abroad was one of the best things he had done.

"I'll have to refine my own color during the new semester. I'm thinking of creating a unique color for myself."

Famous pianists need to have their unique color. Yoon Kwang Hun could figure out Jun Hyuk's real reason for ripping up the contract with LA Sound.

What Jun Hyuk is seeking is music, not success. He thought he was going to cry again when he thought of how well Jun Hyuk is growing up. Yoon Kwang Hun quickly spoke to avoid an awkward situation,

"Have you met a good professor for lessons?"

“Everyone at the conservatory is a teacher. When I see their intense efforts, it makes me want to keep doing something.”

Yoon Kwang Hun recalled something he had been forgetting because of the mention of professors.

“Oh right. Do you remember Professor Jeon Hye Jin?”

“Yes. The chatty old woman.”

“What? He he. Yeah she is a bit talkative. Anyway, give that professor a gift.”

“Why? Did something happen?”

“Every time Professor Jeon Hye Jin has a concert, you know your piano song? The last track in your album, Close.”

“Yes.”

“She always performs that song. It’s fixed in her encore repertoire. And she’s been on TV before where she played that song and praised you a ton. A lot of your albums were sold thanks to her.”

He could imagine how that talkative and nosy, kind woman acted.

“Ah... I see. What do I send her? Should I get her an expensive bag that old women like?”

“Hey. You think she doesn’t have expensive bags? Not stuff like that, but something she would really appreciate.”

“What is that? Just tell me. Don’t you know what old women like since you’re an old man?”

“This brat! It’s not an issue of old women and old men. Make a piano song for her. You’ve gotten a lot from her until now.”

As soon as Jun Hyuk thought of a song that would be perfect for that talkative woman, he started laughing already. He thought of a comic accent that would not be appropriate for her powerful and incredible piano skills.

Just then, a music video flowed from the TV they had left on without much thought. Both men who were half lying on the bed bolted into a seated position. Two types of music that did not go well together at all mixed to stimulate their eyes and ears.

There is an odd feeling to the unbalance between the music and video. Yoon Kwang Hun was lost in the screen while Jun Hyuk in the music.

When the 5-minute video ended, they looked at each other.

“What... What on earth is that?”

“I’ll say. It’s really irksome.”

“Isn’t that on the verge of child abuse? Goodness.”

Their jaws were dropped at the shocking Japanese music.

“We saw on TV yesterday. There’s something that a metal band and girl group were mixed to make.....”

“Oh, that band is pretty popular these days. They’re so popular that they have their own concert. It’ll probably be Baby-Girl Metal.”

The Japanese supervisor coordinating their work now had an interesting expression regarding Yoon Kwang Hun’s question.

“The girls are so young.”

“Two are elementary school students or something and the main vocal is a high school student? Well... it’s pretty common to see idols in elementary school here.”

It has been said that the age of Korean and Japanese idols has been getting younger because of the increasing number of kidults.

“But why is the band in charge of the accompaniment wearing masks?”

“Because they’re embarrassed.”

The Japanese supervisor’s expression changed from that of regret to the affirmative.

“They’ve covered their faces because they’re embarrassed that they’re just performing behind a girl group. They perform without their masks as well, but who they really are is shrouded in mystery.”

The reality is that it is becoming more difficult to be a rock band in Asia.

“The main vocal of the girl group is pretty good.”

“Yes. But if you just configure a group with a main vocal, it’s only a female vocalist metal band. And the music needs to change a lot.”

Jun Hyuk wondered who it was who was able to make this music by a band of a bizarre combination as it was not bad.

“It’s just a hit created through the planning of a record label. Since it’s a combination of a metal band and cute girls, it isn’t awkward no matter what kind of music they touch and it’s a given that they’ll have a fan base.”

Jun Hyuk remembered that Alex Zakin said ‘music that sells’. A record label has the very important role of ‘planning’ in order to create music that sells.

“It means that the Japanese market for music is that hard. Since they can’t break into the international market through like Korea with its Hallyu movement, they need to come up with all sorts of ideas.”

Japanese record labels are most envious of Hallyu. Japanese popular music has not been able to the international realm since the 80s. There was no need to look overseas when domestic demand is large and robust.

“If Mr. Jang were to have activities in Japan, he will really become a superstar. He is able to work with a variety of genres and has outstanding looks. He would have fans of each genre and even old women who love Hallyu... Honestly, it’s just a pity for us. Ha ha.”

At the end of the supervisor’s expression of regret regarding Jun Hyuk, they began discussing Jun Hyuk’s promotion schedule.

There is no way to express how tiring the interviews with the three magazines were. They focused on Jun Hyuk’s unfortunate past rather than on his music. However, the following joint interview with five power bloggers was so fun that his mood lightened.

They had the temperament of nerds no matter who looked at them and they relentlessly asked Jun Hyuk about each song in the album. When they even had a sharp question analyzing the variations with the classical chord hidden in the music, it was suspicious whether these people were just bloggers or music critics.

When all of the interviews were complete, he had to go to a photo shoot for an album package that would be sold as limited edition for promotional reasons.

This shoot with meticulous Japanese people was harder than the time he worked with XOR. It was dawn when they finished the shoot.

His promotions ended sign meetings in Tokyo and Osaka. The fun aspect was that most of the people who waited on the long line to get Jun Hyuk's signature were men.

Yoon Kwang Hun rejected the Japanese company's request to extend Jun Hyuk's promotion period and basically chased Jun Hyuk back to America. He did not want to waste Jun Hyuk's precious time in Japan when he had such a clear goal ahead of him.

Chapter 131

When Jun Hyuk came back to the dorms, he started daily life again. He wrote out notes while reading a book in the library. The only change was that he spent more time in front of a piano.

After about a week since he got back from Japan, he got a call from the front desk saying that he has a guest. He thought about who would come looking for him and rushed to the cafeteria on the 1st floor.

There was an Asian woman in her 30s sitting alone in a cafeteria empty because of the break.

“Jang Jun Hyuk?”

Natural Korean. Jun Hyuk could guess who it is.

“Yes. Are you by chance a lawyer?”

“Yeah. That’s right. My name is Lim So Mi.”

Jun Hyuk shook the hand she held out.

“Ah, you’re the person Teacher Jo Hyung Joong spoke about.”

“Yeah.”

Her business card said Katherine Lim.

“You didn’t have my cellphone number? You could have just called me.”

“I just wanted to come. I would get to see the famous Clayton as well. I also heard that you were always studying at school. I wanted to check.”

“Excuse me? Are you watching me?”

“Not watching, but checking.”

He had expected her to be warm from what he heard in Japan, but she has a dry tone.

“Can I smoke here?”

“No. It’s a non-smoking area. There’s a separate room for smoking, but do you want to go there?”

“No, let’s just go out. I saw a nice cafe out front. Smoking rooms are uncomfortable for no reason. It’s not a crime to smoke or anything.”

As soon as they sat down in the cafe, the lawyer lit a cigarette. She took a delicious puff and her cold expression seemed to relax a bit.

“I’ll formally introduce myself. I’m a second generation immigrant and I’m 36 years old. I’m divorced with one daughter. It’s not Harvard law, but I graduated from Columbia law which is also pretty well known. I’m living in the suburbs of New Jersey and I make enough money to live comfortably.”

“Excuse me... I didn’t ask you.”

Jun Hyuk was confused as to why she was suddenly revealing her personal information.

“Still. I know a lot about you, but you don’t know anything about me. I’m telling you in advance that’s unfair.”

She talks about fairness of minor things like this. Jun Hyuk started to like this cold lawyer.

“I don’t have a good impression of Korean study abroad students. I’ve seen a lot of immature kids who are just rich and don’t study, getting into all kinds of trouble.”

“I’m not like that.”

“Yeah, I know. I looked into you. You’re impressive.”

Lim So Mi put out her cigarette and quenched her thirst with coffee.

“You just have to keep two things in mind if you want to work with me. Don’t get into unnecessary trouble and call me. Drunk driving, drugs, girls. I don’t take care of those kinds of things. And if you left something to me, trust me. Whatever the result is.”

She seemed to resemble Baek Seung Ho. Is it her confidence?

“I was told that I can talk to Lawyer Baek Seung Ho in Korea about anything related to money. Is that right?”

“Yes.”

“Then I can talk to him about contract results?”

“Yes. There’s no reason to tell me as well.”

“That’s good.”

She did not want to have to report everything to a young kid.

“Then I have something to tell you too.”

“Yeah.”

“I’m not going to do anything other than write songs for the time being.”

“I guess that means you want me to look over the contract articles carefully?”

“I guess so.”

Lim So Mi smiled slightly and took out a document from her bag.

“Very well. This is a contract saying that you’re electing me as your agent. You can sign here. Also, you can be assured with this since Lawyer Baek already looked over this contract.”

When Jun Hyuk signed the contract, she put it back in her bag.

“So the first thing I have to do is to go to LA?”

“Yes.”

“Okay. Leave it to me. Then shall we get up now?”

When Jun Hyuk stood up, Lim So Mi gave him a paper bag that was sitting next to her.

“And take this.”

“What is this?”

“I heard you like tonkatsu. I made some. There’s sauce inside as well, so get some instant rice from the Korean supermarket and eat it together. Just microwave it. Do you have one?”

“Yes. We have one in the cafeteria.”

“Great. Then I’ll call you when I’m back from LA.”

As Jun Hyuk watched Lim So Mi while she stood the collar of her coat and left, he thought that she was similar in some ways to Yoon Kwang Hun. Her cool tone, and even in her pretending to be indifferent. She seemed to be someone with a warm heart.



Two days after he signed the contract with Lim So Mi, Jun Hyuk received a call from her.

“Is this Jun Hyuk? I’m Lawyer Lim.”

“Yes. Hello.”

“The contract with LA Sound is complete.”

“Okay. Thank you.”

“But you turned out to be a much more impressive person than I had thought.”

“Excuse me?”

“You made a large label like LA Sound hang on and ask for favors.”

Lim So Mi’s voice sounded a little pleased.

“Oh, the record contract?”

“Yeah. They made a fuss asking to make just three more.”

“So what did you do?”

“What else would I do? I made it clear that there wouldn’t be anymore. I got to act a bit pompous thanks to you.”

“Yes. Thank you.”

“Then I’ll see you in New York.”

Jun Hyuk hung up the phone and ate the last piece of tonkatsu.

‘Whew – I barely ate all of that. This woman’s cooking is the worst.’



As the weather warmed, the students who went to their hometowns started coming back one by one. Jun Hyuk’s roommate, Danny, opened the door to the dorm and came in and showed how happy he was to see Jun Hyuk with an exaggerated voice.

“Jun! My maestro! I’m back. Did you miss me? Ha ha.”

Danny pulled out his violin before he even put his luggage away.

“Listen to this. This is the fruit of my efforts during the break.”

While Danny played the violin, Jun Hyuk thought about how he would tell him the news.

“What do you think? Isn’t it pretty good?”

“Danny. Sit down for a second. I have something to tell you.”

“What is it? Why are you so serious? Was it bad?”

“No. It was really great. It’ll be perfect if you’re just careful with three parts.”

“What? There are three?”

Danny thought back to his performance to figure out what three parts Jun Hyuk was referring to, but Jun Hyuk's words made his mind go blank.

"Danny, we have to dissolve our quintet now. You need to make a different team. I think it'll be better for you to play in a string quartet from now on."

"What? Why?"

Danny kept thinking about the word dissolve, and could not hear anything else.

"First, Coline can't do it."

"Coline?"

"No. I'm sure it's better to hear the details from Coline himself. And....."

"And what?"

"I'm going to fall out too. I'm going to focus on the piano from now on."

Maintaining a quintet when two people out of five dropped out is impossible. Jun Hyuk saying that he was going to focus on the piano rang like thunder in Danny's ears.

"Jun. Are you preparing for the competition? Since there are 4 years left until the Chopin Competition, the Long Thibaud next year? No. The Chaikovsky Competition this June?"

"No. I'm not interested in competitions. I just want to think about piano a little more."

Jun Hyuk needed to tell Danny who was lost in shock, one more thing.

"Lastly... I'm leaving the dorms."

"You're leaving the dorms? You... Are you living with Amelia?"

The shock on Danny's face was incomparable to what he had shown until now.

"Yeah. Amelia and I decided to do that. We already have a condo leased."

The last thing shocked Danny the most. He could not speak for a long time.

The first thing Danny said to break the silence was so unexpected that even Jun Hyuk was surprised.

“Can I go visit?”

“What?”

It is a quintet that cannot be maintained because of Coline, not just Jun Hyuk. And Danny had wanted Jun Hyuk to choose to focus on the piano.

Moving out of the dorms is a choice that anyone would make if their relationship with a girlfriend gets deeper. It is not something to be opposed to just because he is upset about it. Danny knew well that if he had a girlfriend, he would look into houses to live in together right away.

A friend should congratulate and be happy for him.

“Of course. Come over whenever you want. Ha ha.”

Danny came back to his cheerful state and started talking to Jun Hyuk,

“But you need to take some lessons from me.”

“Lessons? What lessons?”

“The things you can’t ever do and what you have to be careful with while living with your girlfriend. Things that naive guys like you would never know. Listen carefully.”

Danny’s long lecture began.

“First is the toilet lid.....”

Chapter 132

With three days before school started again, Amelia came back to school. She opened the door to Jun Hyuk's room and ran to him.

She did not pay mind to Danny who was also in the room and kissed Jun Hyuk for a long time before looking at Danny.

"Hi Danny. Long time no see."

"Hi Amelia. How was your tour?"

There was no doubt that she had greeted him indifferently. Amelia did not even answer Danny, and turned her head to Jun Hyuk.

"Jun. Did the album come out? The improv performance with Stanley Clarke?"

"Not yet. I heard it'll be out around April or May."

"Stanley Clarke? Improv performance? Album? Jun, what's this about now?"

When Danny heard about what had happened with LA Sound, he showed happiness as if it were his own problem.

"Jun. A performance album with Stanley Clarke is a steady seller no matter what. His fan base is really big. You said you rented the condo? Just buy one! Is this the birth of a couple that can sell a million albums? Ha ha."

When Amelia heard about renting an apartment, she snapped her fingers remembering something,

"Jun. You already leased it? I forgot about it."

"Yeah. It's close to the school. Riverside Condo. Do you know what it is?"

Amelia shook her head, but Danny knew that Riverside Condo is the most expensive in New Jersey.

“What? Riverside? Isn’t that place really expensive? The cheapest rent for a one bedroom should be over \$6,000.”

Danny said it and thought it was funny. This couple is already professional performers. Jun Hyuk who can make an album with Stanley Clarke and Amelia who is such a famous pianist that she cannot rest during her break and needs to tour.

Students like he would need to worry about rent, but it is not an issue at all to these two.

“Jun, let’s hurry up and go. I want to see it.”

Jun Hyuk stood up when Amelia pulled his hand, and Danny pulled on a coat as well.

“Danny. Where are you going?”

Amelia looked up at him.

“I was going to go with you to see..... Ah, no. I’m going to get a coffee at the cafeteria.”

When he saw Amelia’s scary expression, Danny hastily went to the cafeteria.

It is an easy walking distance between Riverside Condo and the school.

“What do you think? Do you like it?”

There was one large bedroom and two small rooms, and the spacious kitchen was great as well. However, it was the living room that caught Amelia’s eye. There were two Steinway grand pianos in the wide living room.

“This is too luxe. But that piano is exactly my taste.”

After Amelia looked at each corner of the apartment, she took Jun Hyuk’s hand and went outside.

“Jun. Let’s hurry up and go to the department store. There’s something more important than the piano that we need to buy.”

“Than the piano? What’s that?”

“A bed.”



Professor Randall Poster had never waited for the start of a semester like this one.

He had seen Jun Hyuk amongst the applicants for his course. He had trained a lot of pianists until now, but this is the first time he is meeting a nearly complete pianist.

As soon as he saw Jun Hyuk's name on the list of applicants, he had requested an interview.

"Jun, you applied for a piano class this semester... Can you tell me why?"

"Ah, there isn't a special reason. I wanted to do it before, but I just pushed it back because I needed to get adjusted last semester."

"By chance is there a competition that you're aiming for?"

"Competition? No. I don't have any thoughts of going out on competitions."

"Why not? With your talent, you could be looking at 1st place if you prepare well."

"I think that competitions are for people who aim to become pianists. I still haven't dreamt of becoming a pianist yet."

The greatest pianist festival is the Chopin Competition in 4 years. Professor Poster saw Jang Jun Hyuk's state in 4 years as that of a top class pianist who would not even need to go out to compete.

He could see hesitation in Jun Hyuk's face.

"Is there... something else you want to tell me?"

Jun Hyuk found courage in Professor Poster's gentle voice.

"Professor. May I ask your thoughts on my piano?"

"Your piano? Why ask? You show the best performances."

"Is that all?"

“Um... Are you being like this because of your similarity to other pianists’ performances?”

“Yes, that’s exactly it. I was wondering if it isn’t just a simple copy.”

Professor Poster looked at Jun Hyuk in disbelief,

“Copy? Achieving a copy to that extent is no longer copying. You’ve made it your own. How many pianists do you think there are who are able to make the music of great pianists of the past their own?”

Jun Hyuk’s concern is unthinkable. Professor Poster wanted to say what Jun Hyuk needs to hear most.

“Jun. Do you know what Igor Stravinsky said?”

When Jun Hyuk shook his head, Professor Poster said,

“Lesser artists borrow, great artists steal. You’re so perfect that it doesn’t even feel like you stole it.”

“Then does that mean you’re satisfied?”

“Didn’t I just tell you? ‘If you prepare well.’ That preparation is referring to creating your color. It’s not even hard for someone like you.”

“Then that’s how it works out in the end.”

“Why? Is there a problem?”

“The thing is.....”

When he saw Jun Hyuk hesitate, he thought of the problems that a few pianists had faced. There are pianists who were able to resolve those problems, and there are those who could not get past it and were left behind.

“Hm... By chance when you perform something that’s entirely your own, do you break rules?”

“Excuse me? What do you mean by rules?”

“A performance that goes beyond the score. Not an issue with song interpretation, but is it that you want to play something outside of the score?”

“No. If I want to stray from the score, all I would have to do is write a new song.”

“Right? That’s entirely possible for someone like you.”

It is a problem that people who feel that something is lacking in the original song experience. Those people however, do not have the ability to make a new song that makes up for the shortcomings. Jun Hyuk is not a pianist who would struggle with this kind of dilemma.

Professor Poster needed to bring up something so difficult that his mouth went dry.

“By chance... is your piano uncomfortable? Do you feel naked?”

“Honestly, yes.”

“I see. You don’t want to show it to others.....”

What is it like that he does not want to reveal it? Professor Poster did not speak for a while. He needs to give advice that Jun Hyuk would be able to understand. Something that falls short might even do harm.

After thinking for a while, he spoke carefully,

“Jun, do you want to hear a story?”

“Yes, tell me.”

“There was a man. All he had were complexes. Rough looks, dark skin, the son of a poor family. He thought that he did not even have a special talent. On top of that, he spent his childhood abused by his alcoholic father.”

Jun Hyuk could guess who the boy Professor Poster was telling him about.

“When he became an adult, his personality was a mess. He was cocky and so cheap that he recorded his account book everyday. He was prone to firing his housekeeper just because he ate a little too much. Like this, he was never able to date properly. He went around lying, spreading rumors that he had dated someone and that they broke

up. Women hated him.”

If Professor Poster’s story was true, men would hate him as well.

“Do you know who this person is?”

“Beethoven.”

“Yeah. None other than the great Beethoven.”

Among Beethoven’s songs, there are those that had explosive popularity and earned him a tremendous amount of money. But no one plays the popular songs now. Those popular songs were written for a special purpose. Music created for nobility. That music just praised them, it did not have Beethoven’s greatness in them.

“Beethoven’s masterpieces are those that capture his core. Everyone criticized his most famous Symphony No. 5 Fate when it premiered, saying that it is uncomfortable. It isn’t music that you can listen to comfortably. Because of its violence and rampancy.”

The symphony Fate was written in 1807 and premiered in Paris, France in 1810. Young Berlioz and his teacher Le Sueur were sitting at this theater.

When the concert ended, Le Sueur, a leader of French music, said “music like that ought not to be written”. An unsophisticated song that does not have a bit of dignity. This is the evaluation of that song at the time.

However, it has become the symbol of western music today. S

“Jun. you also need to look into yourself and love yourself. And that’s what you need to express in your music.”

Professor Poster’s advice ended with him saying that there is no need to be scared.

“Who would like a performance that you can’t pour yourself into? Even if people say they don’t like your piano playing, you have to reveal it. You never know. Everyone might hate it now, but people might go crazy for it in 200 years.”

Jun Hyuk realized that he needs to love himself in order to face his own music.

Chapter 133

That evening, Jun Hyuk ate the delicious Argentinian food tarta that Amelia made, sat her on the armchair in the living room, and sat in front of the piano.

It had taken him a lot of courage to decide to show Amelia his piano.

“Now, listen to this piano that’s truly mine. This is the first time I’m playing the piano in front of someone else.”

Amelia could not understand what Jun Hyuk was saying. His first time? There are a lot of people who have admired Jun Hyuk’s piano until now, including herself.

When she heard the first note of Chopin, she realized what Jun Hyuk had meant by ‘piano that’s truly mine’.

Jun Hyuk played Chopin, Beethoven, and Rachmaninoff one after the other. After listening to his play for over an hour, Amelia was weeping with shock and sadness.

Jun Hyuk finished playing, covered the piano, and spoke to Amelia,

“Do you think you could like piano music like this?”

Amelia quietly went behind Jun Hyuk and hugged him tightly.

“No. It’s not something I can like, but it’s something I can’t help but love.”



A new semester started, but Jun Hyuk and Amelia did not attend any of the concerts opening at school every night.

After their classes, they went back to their home and spent long nights in front of the piano. They needed to soundproof the entire apartment because a neighbor could not handle it anymore and reported them.

Amelia endured Jun Hyuk’s sharp music and did not get overshadowed at all. Rather,

she went further.

If a scintillating blade is before your eyes, you are unable to appreciate the beauty of the knife and become lost in fear. When a sharp blade is hidden in a beautifully crafted scabbard occasionally shows its sharpness, the alluring breath of the master is felt.

Amelia was resolved to creating a beautiful scabbard for Jun Hyuk.

A guy standing proudly in front of Jun Hyuk caught his attention.

“You bought this?”

“Of course. There’s no reason for someone to give it to me for free.”

A red Lexus convertible was waiting for Jun Hyuk in the condo parking lot.

“What do we need a car for? The school is 15 minutes away on foot.”

“There will be a lot of reasons why we need a car from now on.”

He could figure out the hidden intentions behind Amelia’s smile when the weekend came.

Friday afternoon, Amelia yelled ‘TGIF!’ and put Jun Hyuk in the car. She left New York and got on the highway. Jun Hyuk sat in the passenger seat because he does not have a license, put on his seatbelt, and enjoyed the incredible speed Amelia went in.

“Oh, you know how to enjoy the speed when you don’t even have a license.”

“Ha ha. I’ve gone 250km on a Ducati. This is nothing.”

“Really? You want to bet?”

The two people left their cellphones, laptops, sheet music, and scores at home and traveled every week with just their IDs and wallets. With time, they began missing classes on weekdays to travel instead of just on the weekends. They gradually became delinquent college students.



“I think it’s time to show the both of you the results.”

“I’m sure you realize that we did not nag for 2 months after the semester started, but we can’t just stand back and watch anymore.”

Professors Randall Poster and Lenny Greenfield gave Jun Hyuk and Amelia a warning. Most conservatories maintain a free atmosphere and focus on each students’ development, but they need to keep basic rules. Especially the concerts that Clayton prides itself in, are an important factor in assessing students’ abilities.

Not only the professors, but the other students are only able to accept the situation if they show as much improvement in their performances as they missed classes.

The large theater in the school was full of students when word spread that the two students would be performing for the first time since the start of the semester. All of the professors took seats as well to listen to Jun Hyuk’s piano.

Professor Randall Poster was especially full of anticipation because he thought that this evening may be when he would see a new Jun Hyuk.

On the stage, two grand pianos were facing each other.

A collaborative performance between Amelia who is already a famous pianist, and Jun who is a certified genius. As it was the first time that the two people were performing together, there was a lot of attention as to which song they would play.

They walked out on the stage together, bowed to the audience, and sat in front of the piano.

The audience began to murmur. They did not sit in front of a piano each, but at the same one.

When 20 fingers started dancing on top of 88 keys, the murmuring of the audience grew even louder. A song they were hearing for the first time. As anyone would have guessed, it is a new song that Jun Hyuk wrote.

It was a short song that did not even last 5 minutes, but an incredible cheering exploded at the end. The first reason was that the upbeat marching style of music had

brought joy to the audience, and the second was the couple's brilliant technique.

The greatest reason for the applause was their perfect teamwork, making it seem as though one person had been playing with four hands instead of two people being at the piano.

When the applause subsided, Amelia began to speak,

"Jun Hyuk wrote this song. There are a total of eight songs from 'Piano for One Hand' to 'Piano for 8 Hands'. You've probably already assumed this but the song we played today was 'Piano for 4 Hands'. We uploaded the score to the campus intranet a short while ago. We hope anyone with interest will look it up."

As soon as Amelia was done speaking, a few pianists left the theater to find their computers.

Professor Lenny Greenfield looked annoyed. He had discovered and led Amelia. It was just a short 5 minutes, but he could see the change in her better than anyone else could.

Her piano had become more free and mild. She even showed a warmth that was as if she had spread her wings wide, and anyone could rest under them. She was hiding the passion and strength that Greenfield himself had taught her in a deep place.

Everyone in the audience was cheering because it was such a high standard performance that they could feel what she had hidden even if she did not reveal it.

Professor Lenny Greenfield realized with today's performance that he could no longer say that Amelia is a student that he trained. Amelia had a separate teacher.

Professor Randall Poster could not hide his bitter expression either as he saw the excitement of the audience.

'Will it be a long time before we get to see Jun's true self?'

Professor Poster wanted to see a passionate piano performance from Jun Hyuk that is comparable to Amelia's. He had anticipated their explosive piano to ring throughout the theater, but they had given a performance that only showed their fantastic teamwork.

‘Amelia is the only one who is developing infinitely, thanks to Jun.’

Pianissimo that could be heard throughout a lively march like a faint bell. The average person would have found it difficult to distinguish which fingers the sounds were coming from, but it is possible for an expert like Randall Poster to make a clear distinction.

He could tell who it was even with his eyes close. Professor Poster was certain that Amelia had grown to the point where she could leave the school soon.

‘She’s quite a lucky girl, that Amelia.....’

Jun Hyuk had appeared when she needed someone like him. Then development through a deep relationship. The best teacher Amelia had met is not Professor Lenny Greenfield, but Jun Hyuk.

Chapter 134

When May, the queen of the seasons began, two incidents shook the school. It was a large box and a letter delivered to the school.

When Jun Hyuk arrived at the school with Amelia, he received a large box from the front desk. It had the LA Sound logo marked on it, so many people showed interest.

“Jun, could this be?”

“I think it is. Did it come out already?”

She does not have the slightest bit of patience. Amelia could have gone into the cafeteria to open the box, but she sat on the ground in front of the welcome desk and opened up the package.

There were 30 CDs in the box along with a letter from Alex Zakin.

The CD jacket was designed with a simple sketch of a bass guitar and piano, and the title was [JUN & Stanley. The First.]

The letter said that the title The First indicated their first meeting, and held Stanley Clarke’s wishes to continue with a Second and Third. Alex Zakin also said that they planned to start recording the 10 songs that Jun Hyuk made soon.

Since there was not an appropriate band, 8 people who led the renaissance of heavy metal from the second half of the 70s to the 80s would be participating. He even joked that if Jun Hyuk knew who those people were, he would be astounded.

A booklet inside the package contained Stanley’s interview with such praises that Jun Hyuk was too embarrassed to read through it.

When students who saw the CD began to gather and realized that the stars of the album are Jun Hyuk and Stanley Clarke, they all started holding out their hands for the CDs, and 30 copies disappeared quickly.

It is not the case with everyone, but most people who like classical also enjoy jazz. In

modern times, classical had already started being influenced by jazz and a lot is borrowed from jazz.

There was no way that these students did not know Stanley Clarke, a jazz great. They were shocked that Jun Hyuk had created an improv album with the master of jazz and there was not a single person in the school who did not know about it.

After about a week since he received the CDs, the album was everywhere in stores. Jun Hyuk bought dozens of his album and sent them to Korea.

The professors were also surprised and happy about the news of Jun Hyuk's album, but it was pushed back when a letter arrived.

The cafe was full of a dissonance-like bass guitar and piano melody. Two part time workers looked upset as they cleaned. The boss had opened the cafe with this music that sounded like noise every morning.

On the other hand, Yoon Kwang Hun looked at the CD jacket and drank his coffee with a pleased expression.

The employees waited for the first customer to hurry up and arrive. Yoon Kwang Hun changes the music to easy to listen to classical when customers come in.

Their faces brightened when they heard the bell at the entrance. But it had to be someone that Yoon Kwang Hun knew because he got up to greet him himself. The music did not change.

"Welcome. You didn't have to come here yourself... It would have been more comfortable for me to go to Seoul."

"No, it's okay. People like us who are always in the recording studio need to come out once in a while to get fresh air and to know that the seasons are changing."

The two employees watched Yoon Kwang Hun carefully as they approached them with a piece of paper.

It was difficult to pretend not to notice with Yoon Jung Su, Jang Na Rae, and Jo Hyung Joong were gathered in one place.

"Hey! He's in the middle of speaking..."

“It’s alright. There aren’t very many people who ask for my signature. This kind of chance is rare. Ha ha.”

The employees got their signature, took a few pictures, and bowed to leave.

“The music that’s coming out now is?”

“Yes, it’s Stanley Clarke.”

Yoon Kwang Hun handed over a few CDs that he had prepared.

“It’s hard to believe this even while I’m looking at it.”

“The only proof that this is Jun Hyuk’s album is the title. He should’ve taken a picture of something. What a waste.”

Jang Na Rae could not take her eyes off of the CD. Even just a year ago, they had done work together in the recording studio and gone out on broadcast together. But that Jun Hyuk had already gone to a high place where he released an album with a worldwide great.

“Do we have to release this to the media? Should we tell them?”

Yoon Jung Su held the CD and got lost in thought. He was sure it would become news if they prepared a press release and spread the word, but hesitated because the genre is jazz. Jazz manias would find out anyway, and Stanley Clarke is just some musician they had heard of to the average person.

“Mr. Yoon, what do you think?”

“Is there a reason to tell them? It could just generate unnecessary gossip. Anyway, jazz is not a mainstream genre in Korea.”

“That’s true. I think there would be a better effect to let the Japanese side know and promote it there.”

Yoon Jung Su had not imagined that Jun Hyuk’s second album would be jazz. He had thought that it would be a piano instrumental, the blues, or even rock and roll genre.

He remembered what Jo Hyung Joong had said in passing. It seemed like the time had

come where as he said, the album that they produced could be Jun Hyuk's last one in Korea and that there would be a day when its value would increase beyond their imaginations.

"Mr. Yoon. I heard a 2nd album is coming out soon?"

"Yes. Rock stars from the 70s and 80s will be playing Jun Hyuk's music. I heard that LA Sound is anticipating this song more. They expect Americans in their 40s with purchasing power to open their wallets."

"If we know who those musicians are, don't you think it'll become a popular album in our country as well? They're targeting the 70s and 80s generation."

Yoon Jung Su showed great interest.

"Should I tell him to look into it? Won't LA Sound tell Jun Hyuk if he asks?"

"Oh, will you do that for me? Truthfully, I would like to make sure to introduce this album in the Korean market. There are a lot of elderly people who think that Jun Hyuk is an idol or something. I'm going to change that perception of him completely."

"Do you have a license agreement?"

"Not me, but there is a store that is showing interest."

"A store?"

"There's a store called Tasteful Party."

"Ah, Tasteful Party."

Yoon Kwang Hun hit his knee. A music store run by an affluent doctor. It is a specialty store that sells music that is difficult to find in the city like rare music, classical, genres that are unpopular in Korea. It is a store that Yoon Kwang Hun also went to often.

According to rumors, it records a deficit every year but the doctor makes up for the rest of the deficit with the money he earns at the hospital to keep the store going for people who love music.

"If it's that store, I'll have to help in any way I can."

Yoon Jung Su brightened at Yoon Kwang Hun's good-natured reaction. He felt he had let go of a little responsibility in getting Jun Hyuk's music out to the world.

Chapter 135

The Festung Hohensalzburg that is easily visible in the city of Salzburg is grand like an iron fortress. Hohen also means fortress. Archbishop Gebhard von Helfenstein began its construction in the year 1077 and with its continued extension over 700 years, it boasts an incredible scale.

It is so large that the citizens of Salzburg used it as a refuge during war.

Every July and August when the Salzburg Festival opens, there is a concert here every night. And since the standard is so high, the best vocalist and conductor in the world participate. It is the world's top music festival with attendance by musicians from over 75 countries every year.

It is a music festival that does not bring shame to a place called Mozart's hometown.

New York's three schools of music, Juilliard, Eastman, and Clayton-Hoffman received a bold proposal from the committee of the Salzburg summer music festival.

They were asking if they would like to participate in a program called 'New York's Conservatories'.

It was a request for students from the three schools to create an orchestra and perform for three days. Of course the repertoire would be Mozart's works.

Upon receipt of this respectful letter, a faculty meeting began with the dean at the center.

"Isn't the idea okay? I do not think it is bad to work with music of other schools."

"But this is also a competition between the three schools. Which one has the most students chosen as members will also be something to worry about."

"The organizers thoughts are to create enjoyment with this plan. The same proposal went to schools in Vienna, Paris, Prague, and Berlin as well. In other words, they're thinking of making us battle it out by city."

“Ha ha. Then what about that? Young people don’t reject these kinds of battles.”

The professors’ opinions were divided, but they could understand the organizers’ plans. The gifted at educational institutions all around the world. The chance to compare their skills in one place. They are aiming to gain public attention by putting in a competition, which is not fitting in the festival.

“Is there no word from Juilliard and Eastman?”

All of the professors looked toward the dean.

“Since they can’t completely ignore the Salzburg Festival committee... Anyway, I would like to hear all of your opinions first. I need to make the decision together with you.”

“I’m for it.”

When Professor Hirani agreed to it without hesitation, the other professors naturally leaned toward favoring it. The dean smiled widely in satisfaction regarding the decision.

“Professors. By chance. Have you thought of what a good repertoire might be?”

“Is there a reason to decide it already? It won’t be late to select the songs after putting the orchestra together.”

How could they already be contemplating the repertoire when they just made the decision to participate? It is not an easy feat to choose the songs out of Mozart’s 600 that will complement the students’ passion the most.

“Well... It’s a bit embarrassing to say. What do you think of opera?”

“Excuse me? Opera?”

The professors started to murmur. An opera involves production, not just music. If dance is included, it becomes a combination of the arts that requires the direction of a choreographer.

“Dean. Why an opera?”

“I would like to give the opportunity to students who are vocalists, not just the

instrumental parts.”

None of the professors believed the dean’s words full of goodwill. He does not have the personality to pay attention to such details.

The dean laughed as he received the suspicious gazes of the professors. S

“He he. Well this is the formal reason.”

After he drank the coffee sitting in front of him, he confessed his real reason,

“It’ll be an event that the school board will like.”

“Aha.”

“That’s what it was.”

There were low shouts from everywhere. They had realized the complicated thinking behind it when they heard the words school board.

“It’s not just me. The deans of Juilliard and Eastman would also like it if we say we’ll perform an opera. They’re in the same situation that I’m in.”

Then, one professor spoke baldly,

“Are you doing this because of the donations?”

“That’s it. Truthfully, this isn’t a festival but a competition. A competition between schools of Europe and New York. If our New York schools come out superior, many more resources will come to us.”

As soon as the dean finished speaking, a professor added a hidden purpose,

“It is the perfect set-up for fundraising efforts.”

“It is. The rich who have too much money are attracted to exciting things like competitions. And isn’t this an issue of pride? If we do better than the European cities, our rich people from New York won’t hesitate to hand over their money. Hm hm.”

The dean coughed awkwardly after being so explicit.

“As you know, a lot of the school’s finances are riding on donations, so I believe that you’ll understand what I’m saying. And the deans of Juilliard and Eastman will also be saying what I just said at the moment.”

The dean’s last words put the nail in.

“So you’ve already contacted them.”

“Yes. We discussed the issue together this morning. They both agreed to it.”

Making the decision may be easy, but the process and predicting the results will not be easy. The professors began to think of the realistic problems.

“But there is too little time to prepare. If it is at the end of July, we don’t even have 3 months and it won’t be easy to perform Mozart’s magnum opera. The students who participate in this will probably have to invest 24 hours of their time to this. They won’t be able to do normal lessons.”

“Dean. Even if we do an opera, will it come out successfully? This is an issue of the skill of vocalists. Even famous vocalists find Mozart’s opera difficult because there is a lot of singing.....”

The dean could understand their worries, but he knew that this was the time to push forward. He did not want to lose the opportunity to have a donation party.

“Aren’t they in training anyway? Don’t we need to lower the standard for success? And no matter how grounded the citizens of Salzburg are, they won’t have such strict standards. And an opera isn’t something that is always available.”

The professor of conducting had greater worries than the professor of vocals did. He seemed to be fretting the most.

“The realistic issue is the conductor. The Salzburg Summer Festival committee said that the entire orchestra needs to be composed of students. Do you think there is a conducting major student in the three schools with the ability to lead an opera for two hours?”

The professors’ worries were flooding in when someone broke out in laughter.

“Ha ha. This is... well. Dean, you are impressive.”

The professors all looked at Professor Hirani who had started laughing.

“The conductor is surely a student from our school.”

“Bingo.”

The dean laughed as he met eyes with Professor Hirani. That is when the other professors thought of the same student.

“Ah, I see. The future conductor of the New York Philharmonic is at our school.”

“And I can affirm that no one in Europe will bring an opera as part of their repertoire.”

The dean’s last words showed his commitment that he could not lose out on the donations.

Chapter 136

As soon as the notice came up on the campus intranet, the school was flipped inside out. The students who were already sure to be soloists did not pay attention, but most of those who were not had a hunch that another opportunity had come.

They could stand on stage for a whole 4 days at this music festival where the greats of each area participate. The vocalist students were most enthusiastic because it is an opera, a rare experience.

It is also a golden opportunity to show how they conduct an orchestra in front of the best maestros.

However, they need to choose between all of the students that gathered from the 3 schools. They could pick a few students for the instrumental parts, but there is only one conductor. There were also a lot of students who gave up early when they heard that they would be conducting an opera in Salzburg.

The judges were composed of professors from all three schools to ensure fairness. The stage was covered with a white cloth, so they could not know who is performing. The judges just wrote their scores on an evaluation sheet with the participants' numbers printed on them.

The people with the highest scores take the 1st and 2nd instrumental parts.

The students' hopes that each school would have 20 people chosen, came crashing down. Juilliard took most of the spots for an orchestra configured on skill alone, and there were only 10 performers selected from Eastman. Fortunately, the bandmaster who is the concertmaster is from Eastman, so it felt like they had saved face.

However, Juilliard was not comfortable either. There were not many applicants from Clayton and their chances to succeed in the audition exceeded 50%.

When the orchestra configuration ended, the audition for opera vocalists began. This is the audition that surprised the judges most. Most of the applicants showed abilities beyond their expectation. This is especially the case with a soprano who had such surprising skill that the common opinion was that she was suitable to be a

primadonna.

When participant number 4 started singing Bellini's opera Norma, Casta Diva, the professors could not hide their shock. A perfect bel canto vocal rang throughout the theater.

Bel canto means beautiful song and it is often called 'the most beautiful sound that a human can express'.

The soprano is as light as a butterfly flying away and expresses the splendor of the treble, but there needs to be a voice like a treble while being able to handle a heavy weight with the treble. Contrary to this, the falsetto is sung with only high notes.

Bel canto is considered the ideal technique for Italian operas and Mozart's opera.

It was to the point where the judges thought that they were at a concert instead of judging.

"Participant number 4 is of an entirely different level."

"It's not just that she was born with a good tone, but the stability shown in the treble is key."

"The expressiveness is incomparable with other participants."

As the judges' praises continued, a Juilliard professor smiled arrogantly. The other judges saw the smile and realized that the participant is from Juilliard.

"Good, right? She's only 19 years old."

If the soprano from a 19 year old is to this extent, it is normal to already be famous as a born soprano with rave reviews. However, the professors were sure that this is the first time they are hearing this rookie.

"With a student like this, there's no way we wouldn't know....."

When the professors spoke with suspicion, the professor showed a confident smile.

"She was admitted this year. She is not widely known because she was discovered this year."

“By chance?”

“Yes. She had sent an audition video. It was a video where she sang all of the songs in Maria Callas’ best aria album. Without resting.”

Singing the entire album meant that she had sung aria for almost an hour without resting. It also meant that she had gone through intense practice from a young age.

“As soon as our professors saw the video, we all got lost in it and watched it for 50 minutes without even breathing.”

“She’s very refined for a rookie. Did she go to an art high school?”

“No. She’s from a normal school... We heard that her family is also average but she grew up listening to opera music because her parents are manias.”

Not everyone can become like participant number 9 just by growing up listening to the opera instead of popular music. She was born with the voice and has the natural gift of handling bel canto just by listening to it.

“Do you know what the interesting thing is?”

The Juilliard professor did not stop speaking with more to brag about.

“She listened to it so much that she memorized all of the Italian and German lyrics without learning it. Ha ha.”

“Then that means she copied the techniques and embedded them in herself... Well, I’m speechless.”

“And there is another asset.”

“Another?”

“Yes. She’s skinny. Ha ha.”

A larger woman is more advantageous in creating a rich sound. The body itself becomes an instrument because the vessel for the sound to ring is large. When a female soprano goes on stage to sing a song or opera aria, a large body does not pose a problem.

However, it is different in an opera. There is the role to deliver a story in an opera. The person who takes that role must have looks to fit it in order to capture the audience.

The heroine of Mozart's opera Figaro Wedding is a woman awaiting her wedding. If this bride is built large and fat, it becomes an element that disturbs the audience's empathy.

Regardless of the East and the West, female singers were not highly recognized in the past. No matter how good they were, looks could not matter because there were not very many females dreaming of becoming singers. They could become primadonnas on singing alone.

However, singers are now the subject of envy and primadonnas are especially top tier in the profession.

This is where people come gathering first when they have even a little talent, so being thin is also a measure.

"Salzburg Festival may become that child's grand debut stage. We're anticipating her to become this generation's Laura Goldberg. Ha ha."



With the last thing of pride, the conductor selection left, the conductor professors encouraged the students with intense gazes.

A person who can conduct in their 20s is only a person called a prodigy in their youth and becomes a genius as an adult. Is the person not a maestro? It is just a 3-day performance, but it is a precious experience that does not come often to students dreaming of becoming conductors.

Professor Hirani needed to make Jun Hyuk take the baton even if he needed to force him. He had expected Jun Hyuk to be interested because it is a magnum opera, but he did not show much interest in anything beyond classes and appearing at the occasional concert.

It is important to be certain with these kinds of affairs. Professor Hirani did not forget to go to Amelia without anyone knowing to warn her.

“Amelia. I’m doing this because the school’s pride is riding on this. Jun is too divided. We need to let the world know with this opportunity. Don’t you think so?”

“So you’re saying we should debut Jun at the Salzburg Summer Festival?”

“Yes. The world is going to be shocked.”

“I understand. Leave it to me.”

Amelia had an expression full of confidence.

Chapter 137

“Jun, you need to go out for this audition.”

Amelia and Danny printed the notice for the Salzburg Summer Festival and chatted while hanging it in his face.

“Why? It’s during the break. I need to practice all break.”

Jun Hyuk had become more free from last year and had been thinking of traveling during the summer break. Amelia would need to go on tour again and he could not just follow her around. He was thinking of going to Canada, Danny’s hometown, by himself.

“The Chaikovsky Competition is in June. When that’s over, the runner-ups tour Europe. Russia in June, July and August in Europe. But there’s a performance at the Salzburg Summer Festival.”

“Amelia, are you really going out for the competition? I’m pretty sure you don’t need to go out for it with your talent.”

“Well... There’s nothing I can do about it. I receive financial support from the government, but an Argentinian enterprise gives major support too. They’re asking me to pay more attention to the competition this year. I can’t ignore that request.”

In supporting a young artists, there is nothing better than having a runner-up or winner in a competition. It is the same as when a company that is backing a golfer hopes he will win in a major competition.

“So you’re saying we should meet in Salzburg?”

“Yeah. Let’s spend even a few days together in Europe.”

“Hang on. Didn’t you just say runner-ups? Only the runner-ups go on tour?”

“Of course. You don’t think I can be a runner-up? My goal is to win.”

Jun Hyuk pretended not to see Amelia get worked up and spoke to Danny,

“Danny, you too?”

“Jun, you said it yourself. If I can play the violin song you wrote, there’s no problem for me to become a runner-up in a competition. No?”

Danny was full of confidence that becoming a runner-up would not be an issue. He had seen the Long-Thibaud last year. He knew the skills of violinists who were currently frequenting competitions.

Jun Hyuk wavered at Amelia’s last words,

“Jun, there are a lot of Mozart’s handwritten scores at the Salzburg Mozart Museum. Don’t you want to see them for yourself? Mozart’s scores?”

Salzburg. Mozart’s hometown. Jun Hyuk wanted to see Mozart’s handwritten scores. He even had the thought that he might be able to discover a hidden intent in the scores.

“Okay, let’s go to Salzburg. Even if I don’t get picked during the audition, I can just go for a vacation.”

Danny snorted at Jun Hyuk’s doubt,

“Are you joking? Is there a reason you won’t get chosen when you’re the future conductor of the New York Philharmonic?”

Because the repertoire is Mozart’s opera, there were only four people trying out to be conductor. Only Jun Hyuk participated from CH, two were from Juilliard and one from Eastman. The students in Clayton’s conducting major dropped out early on when they heard that Jun Hyuk would be auditioning.

Professor Hirani sighed in relief as soon as he saw Jun Hyuk’s name on the list of candidates.

‘Amelia did well.’

“Jun, what’s up? You’re showing interest in an event like this?”

“Because it’s Mozart’s hometown. I would like to go there.”

“I see. It’s basically a holy land for musicians.”

Professor Hirani was more thankful to Amelia who did him a favor than he was to Mozart.

“Yes. And I heard that there are handwritten scores at the Mozart Museum. I would like to see those.”

“What? Mozart’s handwritten scores?”

“Yes, professor. Why are you surprised... Could it be that they just store them and don’t reveal them to the public?”

“Hm... They’ll probably reveal them. Even if they don’t show them to the public, it should be possible if we ask the officials there.”

“Right?”

Professor Hirani realized that Amelia had seduced Jun Hyuk with Mozart’s handwritten scores.

‘Whew – Well... Since it’s true that the handwritten scores are there.’

Most of Mozart’s scores are stored in world famous museums. Of those, the majority are at the New York Metropolitan Museum near the school. Of course they are not on display to the public, but they would be able to see it if the school made the request.

Salzburg, Mozart’s birthplace, only has a few scores that he wrote when he was 5 years old.

Professor Hirani felt like he would start laughing when he thought of how Jun Hyuk might react upon seeing Mozart’s handwritten scores.

“Alright. Anyway, do well with the audition and I hope you become the conductor. An opera isn’t a common opportunity because it’s expensive.”

Fortunately, the Salzburg Summer Festival committee agreed to cover a lot of the costs. They would lend them the set necessary for an opera and Mozarteum University promised their students for the extras. Mozarteum University was founded in 1841 and has 400 prestigious professors. It is also the alma mater of Berlin Philharmonic

great, Herbert von Karajan.

The audition song to select the conductor was Mozart's Symphony No. 4 in G Minor, the 1st part of K550.

After the four candidates rehearsed for one day, they would audition the next. During the 8 days of the audition, the person who would take the baton became the subject of interest of all students in the three schools.

The 1st part is just 7 minutes, but there is an advantage to taking a later turn in the audition. As the conductor changes, the orchestra members get more practice and become used to the song.

Jun Hyuk was 2nd to audition and he met eyes with the members, exchanged formalities with the concertmaster, and stood on the podium.

Without saying anything, he picked up the baton to indicate that he would start the performance instead.

When there was not a conductor introduction or words regarding the song, the concertmaster stood up and approached Jun Hyuk.

"Look here. Don't you need to tell us how you'll be performing? We'd like to hear your interpretation of this song."

"First, let's hear it. Aren't we just practicing today anyway? And since this song is so famous and the members practiced this so much, I thought they'd be able to perform this even without a score. I can start right away, right?"

This symphony does not have the trumpet or timpani. Jun Hyuk started conducting with an orchestra of 57 people.

Conducting that is neither explosive nor grand. Jun Hyuk kept conducting calmly like a metronome at a 4/4 beat. When the boring 7 minute performance ended, all of the members looked at Jun Hyuk.

Jun Hyuk put the baton down, scratched his head a few times, and said something so outrageous it was a wonder that the members did not throw their instruments at him.

"First, let's reduce the number. There's no reason to have so many people. Violin. You,

you, 2 people. You on the viola.....”

As Jun Hyuk called each performer one by one, his face looked full of queries.

“Except for the 19 people I called, everyone else please leave.”

As soon as Jun Hyuk finished speaking, Clayton students took their instruments and left without a word. The rest could not do that. The concertmaster on the 1st violin bolted up and yelled,

“Look here. What are you doing?”

Chapter 138

He had reduced the instruments to $\frac{2}{3}$. This is the first time he is experiencing something so absurd. However, Jun Hyuk did not lose his confidence as though asking what the problem is.

“Is there a problem?”

“Why are you reducing the members on your own? We...”

“The organization is up to the conductor. Don’t take it the wrong way. I’m not doing this because the performance was bad. Isn’t it definite that there are appropriate instruments for each song?”

“Are you saying that this is the organization for appropriate instruments? It needs to be twice this size at the least!”

Using a lot of instruments has the effect of amplifying the sound. In the past when there was no sound equipment, the way to make the sound spread to all corners of the theater was to increase the number of instruments.

If there are six 1st violins however, there is the difficulty that they need to play the same note. As there are more instruments, the conductor’s role becomes more important in having them play the same notes.

“That’s what you think. I think 19 people... Oh wait, this is a mistake. The two clarinet runners, please fall out. I’m thinking of performing to Mozart’s first version.”

The two clarinet runners slammed their seats and left in disbelief.

If they follow Mozart’s score list, this symphony was completed in July of 1788, but the score that is performed today is a little different. The clarinet is not included in the 1st version, but before this song premiered in Vienna in April 1791, Mozart created a new score with two clarinets added in.

An interesting fact is that the person who conducted the premiere in Vienna was not Mozart, but Salieri. Salieri loved Mozart’s music and cherished him. He also taught

Mozart's son. These facts are in the movie 'Amadeus'.

The concertmaster glared at Jun Hyuk for a while, but the person holding the baton is Jun Hyuk. The only thing they could do was to get everyone to boycott, but they could not do that in an audition.

"Don't think about it in a bad way. This whole orchestra needs to perform in Salzburg anyway. I'm just saying that I'll do the audition song with the best organization. And the audition tomorrow is for me, not for orchestra members. I hope you'll follow my wishes."

As soon as Jun Hyuk finished speaking, the performers took their instruments and left. He is right. They did not know what he meant to show with minimal instrumental parts, but this is the audition to choose the conductor. Some performers even felt relieved that they gained two extra days to practice.

Once the practice room was straightened out, Jun Hyuk spoke.

"Alright. Now everyone listen well. I can say it nicely, but we don't have time. Tomorrow is the audition and we can't practice all night... I have special classes at night and I get in big trouble if I miss them. So I hope you're not too offended by it....."

Jun Hyuk came down from the podium and approached the 1st violin. He flipped through a few pages in the score on the music stand and pointed,

"Here, here, and here. You lost strength in your fingering. It's too weak. And... Here, here, here, you know you went off tone, right? Pay attention to that. And from here, you were a little fast for 6 beats. When you speed up, all the other violins follow you."

Starting with the 1st violinist, he went through 17 members to show them the parts where they made mistakes and made special requests. After going through each person, 30 minutes had passed quickly.

For those 30 minutes, Jun Hyuk's low voice was the only sound that rang throughout the practice room and no one even breathed loudly.

This is the first time they are seeing such a conductor since they started music. A conductor uses animated descriptions to explain the type of music he is trying to express. He only points out mistakes to individual members when there is a grave mistake.

Although the entire orchestra is just an instrument to the conductor, these kinds of criticisms may as well be insults to the performers.

However, they were just surprised that he could remember all of the sounds that 57 instruments made for 7 minutes and did not think about their prides.

“Alright. Please just fix the parts I asked you about. And the thing to keep in mind is that you need to play the parts I did not talk about exactly as you did before. If not, we need to do this again. Let’s not waste each other’s time.”

When no one could speak, Jun Hyuk looked at the concertmaster.

“And I’ll respond to what the concertmaster said before. If you fix the places you need to perfectly, the feeling that will come out. The day for your pay at work to come into your bank account has passed, but it didn’t come in yet. You’re nervous and angry, but I’m sure you can’t make a fuss to your boss in case you get on bad terms and get fired. At times like these, doesn’t everyone think in a good direction? You’re nervous, but you’re sure it’ll come in. I wonder if Mozart wasn’t feeling like this as well. Then shall we start?”

As soon as Jun Hyuk picked up the baton, the concertmaster shouted out in a desperate voice,

“Wait... wait. Can we take a 10 minute break?”

“Why? You played a 7 minute song and rested for 30 minutes.”

“That’s.....”

When the concertmaster stammered, Jun Hyuk smirked and said,

“Fine. If the concertmaster wants to take a break, we need to take a break. Instead, let’s do it in one go. I don’t want to point out the mistakes again either.”

Jun Huk left the practice room alone and murmured in Korean,

“Kid. Where is he trying not to listen.....”

“What on earth is he?”

Students from the other two schools murmured, but Clayton students quietly looked through their scores and checked the parts that Jun Hyuk had pointed out to them again.

“Look here. Tell us what you know. You go to the same school.”

When someone voiced his frustration to Clayton’s cellist, the cellist spoke loudly for everyone to hear,

“I don’t want to say much... so I’ll just say one thing. Forget it if you’re planning on being lax with this. 7 minutes? This is nothing. It’s a piece of cake to that kid. He’s someone who memorizes a 74 minute choral symphony. He doesn’t leave a single choir behind.”

Everyone looked as if they could not believe it, but the cellist did not pay attention and continued speaking,

“Philadelphia’s Bruno Kazel even said that he could lead the New York Philharmonic now. He’s the pianist in the Stanley Clarke album that just came out.”

There were students who finally realized who Jun Hyuk is. It is the first time they are hearing about what Bruno Kazel said, but there are a lot of people who know about Stanley Clarke’s album.

“He’s the future principal conductor of the New York Philharmonic. Do you know how many students there are in our school who try to get his recognition? Everyone is in a craze to try to be on the same team as him. Being recognized by him is the same as being guaranteed a future spot as a soloist in the New York Philharmonic.”

Lastly, the cellist looked around.

“The interesting thing is that he almost never participates in things like this. I’m more curious as to why he’s going out for this.”

When Jun Hyuk came back, everyone stopped talking. The practice room was full of an awkward silence.

“Why is the atmosphere like this? Let’s relax and take it easily. My baton is going to deliver the message exactly, so don’t lose it.”

After they practiced a few times, he started to hear the sound he wanted. Jun Hyuk's face was much brighter. They performed a few more times and Jun Hyuk lightly bowed his head.

“Then let's meet at the audition tomorrow. I'll leave it to you.”

Chapter 139

Over 10 professors who were acting as judges came to realize that what the students had told them was true. Only 17 people came on stage with Jun Hyuk as conductor.

When they confirmed that it was true, their faces were not much different from that of the orchestra members the day before. They had a lot of questions, but they heard the response with music.

Jun Hyuk and the orchestra greeted the judges and started performing right away.

They played Symphony No. 40 at a *molto allegro* (very fast) tempo from the introduction without losing tension. With a breathtaking *dire viola* as the start to the appearance of the treble and bass as though drawing a parabola, it was so fast that they could not feel that 7 minutes had gone by.

It is a song from the 18th century, but it broke down existing forms so much that it is as though Mozart left the song for the 20th century.

When Jun Hyuk finished performing and looked toward the judges, someone spoke,

“Orchestra, please wait backstage.”

The star of the audition is the conductor. There is no reason for the orchestra to listen to what they think about the conductor.

“Jun, can you tell us the reason why you created a 17 member orchestra?”

It is the first question he had expected.

“It was just a measure I took to bring out the best music.”

“A measure for the best music?”

“Yes. You presented me with young students with individuality and only gave me a day’s time.”

They had expected for there to be a special reason, but Jun Hyuk's response was simple that it was due to a shortage of time.

"A day is too little to tune and match tones for 60 students with varying skills of different schools. How can you make extreme changes to Mozart's symphony? Not even a conductor at the top can accomplish this."

"Are you saying that's why you reduced it?"

"Because we can prevent the same instruments from conflicting at the least."

"You didn't have the thought that the sound might weaken because there is such an extreme reduction in the instruments?"

It was hard to distinguish which professor was asking the questions because the seats were so dark. Jun Hyuk looked where he heard the sound coming from, and responded,

"It is okay. Since the seats are completely empty anyway, all of the factors that would absorb the sound are gone..... Professors, aren't you sitting in the very front seats? Even if the sound is weakened, didn't you all hear it precisely?"

"Then this is the last question. Your performance sounded like the tempo and sense conflicted a bit. Please explain the reason for that."

Jun Hyuk could tell that the question was from Professor Hirani by the voice. He laughed slightly because he remembered how Professor Hirani had asked him his interpretation of songs countless times.

Jun Hyuk expressed his interpretation of the song in brief words,

"It was because it is an uneasy race."

There was the sound of low lamenting to Jun Hyuk's answer.

"An uneasy race....."

"Yes. Mozart wrote this song 3 years before he passed away. He was suffering under extreme poverty and he did not even guard his wife's side. He wrote the song with that feeling so even though it's a fast-paced song, it doesn't have to be light-hearted."

“Then that’s also the reason why you chose Mozart’s 1st version?”

“Yes. I prefer a Mozart under pressure over a light Mozart. The version with the clarinet has a light feeling to it.”

After a short silence, someone notified them that the audition is over.

“Hm... I understand. You did well.”

When Jun Hyuk bowed and gave his greetings, a new voice held him back. It must be a professor from another school.

“Wait. Sorry, but can you perform again? We can call in the orchestra waiting outside.”

The other professors must not have expected this because they began to whisper. Jun Hyuk could not figure out a reason to listen to his performance again either.

It is not a problem though because it is a short part and not the entire song.

The 17 performers came out with puzzled expressions and played the song again with Jun Hyuk’s conducting.

“It was an unreasonable demand, but you did well.”

At the end of the 2nd performance, there were no longer any questions. When Jun Hyuk and the performers quietly left the stage, the professors’ evaluation started actively.

“What do you think?”

“His stance on music is different. The first candidate only focused on not making mistakes... I feel like the 3rd and 4th will be the same.”

Jun Hyuk’s wishes to bring out the best music possible had left the greatest impression on the professors.

“He even considered the seats in his organization. That’s not something we expected.”

“His interpretation of the song is outstanding. It’s also impressive that he can perform to that interpretation.”

Professor Hirani could not help his curiosity and asked one of the professors,

“Oh right, Professor Neill. Why did you have them perform twice? Is there something that you had missed?”

“No. The performance was great. I only wanted to check the time.”

“The time? You didn’t do that for the first candidate.”

“I didn’t need to check the first candidate to know. It isn’t necessary when he isn’t trying to deliver the song and is just trying not to make mistakes. There wouldn’t be a difference in the results even if we heard it twice.”

“So how did the times of the two performances come out?”

“Both performances were exactly 6 minutes and 56 seconds. There was not even a 1 second difference.”

Even a folk artist singing his own song twice with just an acoustic guitar would have a 1 or 2 second difference. Controlling multiple performers while matching the time is not an easy feat.

It meant that the conductor had made the song entirely his own by fighting with the score, and that he had interpreted it perfectly.

“We had not expected for a perfect concert in just a day either, but to think that he came up with such an extreme method... I’m speechless.”

“I also found it surprising that he did not think of us as judges, but considered us as part of an audience.”

“The desire to reduce the amount of mistakes as much as possible and the desire to present the best music. The difference between these is like a river that you cannot cross.”

They knew which student Maestro Bruno Kazel had praised even if the Clayton professors did not tell them.

Chapter 140

Two days after all of the auditions were over, the list of New York's three music conservatories' students who were to be attending the Austrian Salzburg Festival was posted.

With it, a detailed itinerary of the Salzburg Summer Festival came up.

Until May, they would have personal practice sessions with an advisor. In June, they would all meet to practice together. In July, prepare with the students of Mozarteum University.

The special team to perform in Salzburg was created, and Professor Roger Neill of Juilliard became the art director for the opera. Professor Roger Neill is a director in the field of operas and musicals.

"Won't Figaro's Wedding be the best?"

"Yes. It is the most loved opera in the world."

The professors wanted to play the opera that is basically a symbol of Mozart. They looked at the art director as though asking his opinion. He turned his head a bit and started speaking.

"I was thinking about Magic Flute."

"Magic Flute?"

"Yes."

"Do you have a particular reason for it?"

"Because it is the shortest. Considering the ability of the students, shorter pieces will be better."

Mozart's 3 most famous operas, Figaro's Wedding, Don Giovanni, and intermission Magic Flute are 229, 184, and 150 minutes. They selected Magic Flute just because it

is the shortest.

“Jun, did you hear?”

Amelia was lying next to Jun Hyuk on the bed while touching his hair, when remembered something and suddenly sat upright.

“What?”

The Juilliard soprano in the role of the Queen of the Night. Laura something.”

“Huh? Isn’t she a prima donna?”

The most famous aria that Queen of the Night in the opera Magic Flute sings is ‘Hell’s vengeance boils in my heart’.

There is a rumor that in the whole world, there are only 3 people who can sing this aria. This is not true, but rather to mean that it is that hard to express the difficulty and beauty of the song.

First, the Queen of Night calls for the best sound, F6. In terms of transliteration, there are a lot of sopranos who can sing the Queen of the Night. However, there are not very many sopranos who can act out her inner art and hell of revenge. This is why a rumor spread that there are only 3 people in the world who can act out Queen of the Night.

However, Magic Flute’s main character and prima donna is not the Queen of the Night. The main character is her daughter, Pamina.

“Apparently they made Laura Queen of the Night because there wasn’t anyone else who could handle the role.”

“I see. But is that girl really that impressive?”

“Ah, you haven’t heard her sing yet.”

“All of the vocal parts practice at Juilliard. Why?”

“Goodness. Everyone’s making a fuss that she can hit a high F without issues.”

“Really? She can hit a high F naturally?”

Jun Hyuk sat up in surprise as well.

“Yeah. I heard from a vocalist friend that she can’t understand how Laura stayed nameless for so long. I think she’ll become a hot topic at Salzburg.”

“If this is all true, that’ll happen.”

“I was expecting your brilliant debut.”

Amelia pouted in regret.

“I already had a brilliant debut. I was even praised by critics. Ha ha.”

“The album is the only thing that’s brilliant. Can’t you do some interviews? What is that?”

Even though there are limitations to an on-the-spot jam, Stanley Clarke and Jun’s album received high praises from critics. There was particularly a lot of interest in a nameless pianist, so reporters from music publications came looking for Jun Hyuk at the school.

Jun Hyuk however, said that he would not take personal questions and that there is no need for interviews because all of the music is in the album.

Not a single line about Jun Hyuk was released in articles because of a rookie’s arrogant tone, and the news was only wallpapered with articles on Stanley Clarke.

“I think the point has come for you to have a management.”

“It’s okay. I have a lawyer.”

“That’s a legal custodian, not a management. You would have been a star already if you had an agency that took care of your press releases and private interviews.”

No matter how Amelia thought about it, it was a waste that he had lost such an opportunity.

“But is that Laura not going out for the Tchaikovsky Competition? Why not when she’s that good?”

“Because it’s only been 2 months since she started receiving a formal education. I’m sure she needs to train more to fit the scoring method.”

Regardless of how impressive a performance is, the person cannot go up to finals if there are a lot of factors to deduct points with. There are over 10 people who aim to enter the finals. It is just that they touch the judges in different ways, but it is difficult to distinguish between who is inferior and superior.

“Is that right? Then Amelia, you shouldn’t be spending your time with me either. He he.”

“Right? I have to go practice.”

Amelia flipped the bed sheets and ran out to the living room.

‘So she can handle Queen of the Night after just 2 months after entering school.’

Jun Hyuk anticipated meeting this young soprano, Laura. He wanted to see how amazing her vocals are.

“Jun, what are you doing? Can you help me?”

Jun Hyuk forgot about his thoughts on Laura Goldberg because of Amelia’s voice as she spoke coyly. He put on a t-shirt and pants, went out to the living room to sit in front of the piano, and spoke to Amelia in a low voice,

“But... Amelia. What do you think of putting some clothes on?”



Amelia and Danny received Jun Hyuk’s send off and got on a plane to Moscow, Russia.

The piano and violin sections of the Tchaikovsky Competition are held in Moscow, and the cello and vocals in St. Petersburg.

The competition starts with a preliminary assessment that filters through over 600 applicants from 70 countries to about 20 people per part. Amelia and Danny are good enough to pass this stage easily, but they were nervous.

In fact, the judges were ready to check off PASS for the two based on the brief history listed on their applications alone. What stood out the most to the judges were their song choices.

The preliminary examination is a song of the applicant's choice, but they brought songs that not even the judges that have been in music for over 30 years recognized.

Amelia's song is Etude for Piano No. 7 and Danny's is Etude for Violin No. 13.

When their performances were over, the judges thought that the strongest contenders for 1st place in their respective sections had appeared. The songs are glitzy and elaborate as though they were meant to show off the players' skills.

The judges checked the composer's name again to see who had created such an elaborate song that lasted just 5 minutes, but it is a name that they are seeing for the first time.

Amelia and Danny had used the practice songs Jun Hyuk had written for them in their preliminary examination. It was their way of thanking him for his substantial lessons until now.

It is a risk to play a song that the judges do not know, but they did not think that they would be eliminated in the preliminaries because of the song selection. They never once thought that the songs fell behind in quality of the famous songs that other candidates would be performing.

Due to their song selection, the competition officer was busy looking up who composer Jun Hyuk Jang is.

There was also someone in the audience who flipped through the program pamphlet while laughing loudly.

"Ha ha. Jang Jun Hyuk, this rascal. He threw some weird piano song to me, but gift such great etudes to his friends?"

"Professor, is this someone you know?"

"Huh? Who? The pianist?"

"Ugh. I know the pianist too. She's Amelia LaMarque, a strong contender for 1st place.

I'm talking about the composer."

"Yeah. I know him well. One day, he'll flip the world around."

Professor Jeon Hye Jin came to Moscow for her student, Han Ye Ji. She is a top student who she taught well. As soon as she heard Amelia's piano that was tuned from Jun Hyuk's practice song, she knew that her student would not have enough to overstep her.

"Ye Ji, what do you think? Do you think you'd be able to beat her?"

"Let me see. I think I'll know once I get up on the stage."

"Look at you. Seems you're really prepared for this. You haven't lost confidence after hearing that performance."

Professor Jeon Hye Jin felt reassured when he saw her student smiling.

Chapter 141

While Amelia and Danny were waiting for the 1st round of eliminations after passing the preliminary assessment, Jun Hyuk and the orchestra members were meeting the vocals and executive director together for the first time in the Juilliard theater.

The executive director, Professor Roger Neill, approached the members and Jun Hyuk.

"I know you, but I'm sure you don't know who I am? I'm Art Director, Professor Roger Neill."

"How are you, Professor? I remember your voice. Aren't you the person who asked us to perform again during the auditions?"

"Yeah. Didn't I surprise you? Ha ha."

"I was a little surprised."

"I did have good enough reason and you did well. That's probably why we're here now."

The Art Director greeted each member and showed caring.

"Our singers have been practicing with the recorded tape... I have large expectations for the ensemble that will come out with the orchestra today. We need to avoid embarrassment at the least. Ha ha."

He has a modest tone, but his confident laughter shows confidence.

Jun Hyuk finished the tuning below the stage and waited for the art director's direction.

"Shall we see the Overture first? Jun, I'll leave it to you."

The director walked to the center of the seats to check the sound.

The orchestra completed a 7 minute 12 second overture to Jun Hyuk's baton.

“I see you’ve practiced a lot. You’re all performing with confidence.”

The orchestra members knew that their choice had been right because of the director’s compliments.

A few days ago after finishing personal practices and they gathered for the first orchestra concert, the bandmaster brought up something unexpected to Jun Hyuk.

“Jun, can’t we practice like we did during the rehearsal for the conductor audition?”

“What? What are you asking to do?”

“I’m just asking you to tell us in a straightforward way. The places we made mistakes, need to fix, et cetera.”

“But if I talk like that, people will be offended.”

“It’s okay. Everyone already agreed. Isn’t that the only way when we have a short time to create a great performance?”

“Good. Well that’s good for me. We can practice easily.”

Jun Hyuk liked their resolve.

“But everyone, don’t forget this one thing.”

Everyone looked nervous in order to listen to Jun Hyuk’s advice.

“We’re just simple accompanists. Singers are the leads on an opera stage. When we start combined performances with singers, I intend to match it to her no matter what as an accompanist. This means that it may not go as we practice and I might keep changing the command... Follow that well.”

A section of the members showed disappointment. They wanted to show every mistake that singers make with a perfect performance. They did not want to get pushed back in a battle of energy between the singers on top of the stage and orchestra below the stage. However, it is true that they are disappointed that conductor Jun Hyuk is saying he will maintain the original image of an accompanist.

“And we’ll practice in the same way. I don’t know when and where I’ll change up the

tempo, so please don't lose focus."

The practice that began like this became a chance for everyone to confirm Jun Hyuk's reputation for being picky. The members even nicknamed him the 2nd Fritz Reiner.

Fritz Reiner of Hungary, who led the Chicago Symphony to worldwide fame, is famous as an exact and detailed conductor. It is even said that the finest of sounds comes from the end of his baton.

He is called Chicago's dictator and has a hard reputation.

The only difference between Jun Hyuk and Fritz Reiner is their looks. Fritz Reiner is famous for his charismatic looks that recall a godfather of some mafia.

After practicing like this for a few days, the orchestra was not perfect but they had the confidence to stand in front of Professor Roger Neill.

"Then shall we get started? Jun."

"Yes, Professor."

"Act 1, Sheet 1, first song Zu Hilfe! Zu Hilfe! Let's go straight from Bein Mannern, to welche Liebe fuhlen."

He is telling them to perform 7 songs at 30 minutes consecutively. Before starting to conduct, Jun Hyuk asked Professor Roger Neill something unexpected.

"Professor. When the singers were practicing, which tape did you use?"

"Tape? Ah, Berlin Philharmonic's Georg Scholte. Why?"

"Since it'll be better to play something the singers are more used to."

"Yeah that would be better... Hold on. What did you just say?"

Professor Roger Neill thought that he had not understood exactly what Jun Hyuk was saying.

"We'll perform to Scholte's tempo."

“Is... is it true?”

“Excuse me?”

What is he referring to? This time, Jun Hyuk could not understand Professor Roger Neill’s question.

“So what I’m saying is... I – no, the rumor. That Jun, you memorize everything after hearing it once. Is that true?”

“Basically.”

The director forgot the starting signal and stared at Jun Hyuk blankly. This was the same for the singers on the stage.

This did not mean that he memorized all of Magic Flute. They are sure he asked whose album it was. There are a lot of albums of Mozart’s Magic Flute. Most orchestras have released albums with Magic Flute. And this started dozens of years ago.

At the least, there are over 200 albums of Magic Flute. Of those, dozens are famous. How many has Jun Hyuk memorized?

“By chance, have you memorized all of the albums?”

“Of course not. I’m a human being, not a monster. Let’s see... It’ll be about 8 albums. My favorite is the one performed by Georges Pretre at the Paris National Opera Theater.....”

Professor Neill had doubts when he heard the rumors surrounding Jun Hyuk. While serving at various schools including Juilliard, he had seen a lot of geniuses who are able to memorize scores within moments, but this is the first time he is seeing someone who can memorize multiple albums.

Professor Neill came to his senses and forgot what Jun Hyuk said. He cannot just stand here in admiration. He cannot be preoccupied with this talent either. He needs to focus on today’s practice for him to be able to point out any of Jun Hyuk’s mistakes or flaws.

The director approached Jun Hyuk quietly and whispered to him what he wanted.

“Jun, don’t match it to Scholte’s tempo. Do it the way you want to. I want to see your

version, not Scholte's. Of course, don't tell the singers on stage."

Professor Neill smiled a little and went back to the center of the seats.

Jun Hyuk's command started with the first song, 'Save Me!' When the 4th aria, 'Youth, don't be afraid' began, Jun Hyuk could not take his eyes off of the stage. Genius soprano Laura Goldberg finally entered the stage as Queen of the Night.

She came on in a loose t-shirt, and started singing at the 24 second point. The advantages to her timbre do not show yet. They need to get past 3 minutes to see her ability.

Jun Hyuk had such high anticipation that the 3 minutes felt like they dragged on.

Finally, her voice became an instrument. Coloratura! It means 'with color,' a skillfully decorated melody as a simple aria with a peak of virtuosity, naturally bringing out cheering from the audience.

There was not a single error in the rumors concerning Laura.

'She's amazing. Really amazing.'

Even while conducting, the inspiration from Laura Goldberg's voice did not disappear.

The coloratura as a start is D6 (4 octaves), beginning with pianissimo (very low) and becoming fortissimo (very loud) without crescendo (gradually growing louder).

It looked like she would complete the ultra high frequency range coloratura appearing in the 2nd sheet, the art of aria 'Hell's vengeance boils in my heart' in perfect tone.

When the 7 songs were over, Director Roger Neill ran up onto the stage. He gave Laura Goldberg a thumbs up and brought the tenor in the Tamino role and baritone in the Papageno role to point out a few matters they need to work on.

"Do it with confidence. You're plenty capable of handling it. Don't focus too hard on not making mistakes with the German lyrics and try to deliver the message. Keep in mind that if you don't deliver the emotion, it's just a sound even if you've got the voice of a pavarotti."

Director Neill came down from the stage and clapped lightly.

“The thing that surprised me most today was your performance. I didn’t know that you would be able to accomplish this much in such a short period of time. Alright, let’s have strength and go to the end.”

The director tapped Jun Hyuk’s shoulder and whispered to him again.

“I’ll say it again, but I want your Magic Flute. Stop matching the performance to those guys singing. That’s something you have to do once you’re in Salzburg. Right now, you have to show your true self. You understand what I’m saying?”

Jun Hyuk smiled and nodded. He understood exactly what the professor was asking of him.

“Now let’s go straight through to Act 1 sheet 2 without resting. Go all the way and rest for a bit. Jun, let’s start.”

Jun Hyuk started conducting again. He conducted in the way he had always wanted to. Papageno, the comic character even though it is just a supporting role. A performance where this Papageno gets the spotlight. Jun Hyuk did not pay attention to the singers on the stage and kept conducting according to his own tempo.

“Stop!”

When 3 songs were over, the stage was a mess. The singers could not follow the tempo or maintain the breath requested of them by the orchestra. As they got surprised, they could not act out the emotions and they were even off tone.

Professor Roger Neill stopped practice and ran up onto the stage.

“What are you all doing right now? Does the orchestra need to cover for your mistakes? There is only one thing that the orchestra needs to fit to you. When you are engrossed in your character and reach the peak, and they play at that exact moment to bring out the emotion.”

None of the singers could lift their heads at Professor Neill’s sharp reproach.

“You have to become used to the difference between a recorded tape and live performance. If you waver with this much, your legs will shake and your voice won’t even come out in a theater with a full audience.”

Professor Neill went back down to the seats.

“Again from the beginning of Act 1 sheet 1! And pay attention!”

The first joint practice was not able to finish Act 1. Professor Neill was only pleased with the orchestra in charge of the accompaniment. The music came out in whatever way the director requested.

The director sent the exhausted vocals and orchestra members back, holding only Jun Hyuk back.

“The conducting was really scrupulous. Is it normally like this? Or... is it because you can't trust the students?”

“It was a request from the members of the orchestra.”

“Really? That's surprising when those are really proud guys.”

“Because it's frustrating. Honestly, it was a stretch to create an opera with these people in the first place. Aren't most skilled students busy with competitions?”

“All performances have one or two aspects that are a stretch. The better you overcome them, the better orchestra and team you are.”

Professor Neill thought that they are plenty capable of overcoming it.

“Jun. I asked to meet separately because of a personal favor.”

“I see.”

“Are you interested in musicals as well?”

“Musicals? They're good. Aren't they the contemporary opera?”

Language barrier is a disadvantage to the opera. A story that the contemporary person can relate to. A background without restrictions like Les Miserables from a small stage to a large scale.

The opera moved rapidly toward musicals, and already took up a firm area.

“I’m preparing a musical to present on stage this Christmas season. They’re rookies, but good. I wanted to see if you would take care of the performance. If you can’t, I’d like to use a recording of your performance at the least.”

Jun Hyuk accepted it joyfully. He is always happy to get a taste of a new field. And if it is to the point where the famous Professor Roger Neill is creating and producing a show, this means that it is not configured with amateurs.

“Then let’s talk again after the show in Salzburg. It’ll become a rewarding experience for you as well.”

However, they could not know that Jun Hyuk’s time to experience musicals would be pushed back to a much later time due to an incident that is to occur at the Salzburg performance.

Chapter 142

Everyone was exhausted from the never ending practices. As time went by, Professor Roger Neill's words became more harsh, and the music that Jun Hyuk conducted accordingly increased pressure on the singers.

The unusual aspect was not reproach on whether or not the aria is sung well. Rather than pointing out an uncertain tone or a short breath, most of the criticisms were about expression of emotions.

"This is the theater! It isn't a music concert. The theater where you have to fall into each role to succeed! If you do that, the singing will come out naturally. Singing comes out naturally when you fall into your character and can't come out. Then, you'll forget about the tempo, strength, and even the score to have the song flow out naturally."

Director Neill was worked up as he gestured to Jun Hyuk below the stage,

"You have an orchestra that supports you so your emotions are not lacking. This is music that will flow out without problem even if you sing a little differently than the score. Don't worry about the accompaniment being able to follow you."

Even in such a tense environment, there are times when the inside of the theater becomes ecstatic within moments. It is upon the appearance of Queen of the Night. Even Professor Neill closed his eyes and got lost in the music when she came out.

She is a born singer and actress. Her disadvantage is that she is late to come out of an emotion once she falls into it.

When Jun Hyuk heard Magic Flute's winning aria 'Hell's vengeance boils in my heart' for the first time, he even felt like he wanted to write a song to give her.

Queen of the Night who puts a dagger in her daughter's hand, telling her to kill her kidnapper no matter what. Singing of a splendid art and acting with an overwhelming charisma that is ready to go on stage immediately.

When discussing soprano, the famous aria first popera singer 'Kimera' cannot be forgotten.

Her real name is Kim Hong Hee. She created her stage name Kimera in a combination of her last name Kim and opera, the title song of her 1st album in 1985 'The Lost Opera' is the aria Magic Flute.

For her graduation gift, her wealthy Arabian husband had the London Symphony Orchestra perform her first album. However, this album had the phenomenal sales of 1.5 million albums.

The great Le Monde paper in France released the article with headline 'Queen of Popera from Korea,' introducing the term popera for the first time. After this album, 'Hell's vengeance boils in my heart' became the representative song of the opera aria.

Whenever Jun Hyuk listened to Laura's aria, he knew that Amelia's prediction was not wrong. Laura Goldberg would have her brilliant debut at the Salzburg Summer Festival.

While Jun Hyuk was wrestling with the students in practice, Amelia was fighting with people looking to become the best in the world.

Piano finals started in the Great Hall of the Moscow Music Conservatory. The 6 pianists who reached the finals performed 2 people at a time for 3 days and the last race started.

While Amelia was on stage for the 2nd day of finals, the first day of finals for the violin started in the Tchaikovsky Concert Hall at the same time. It is Danny's first performance.

Amelia started performing Rachmaninoff's and Tchaikovsky's with the Russian National Orchestra.

Of the 2 greats' music, the concerto of Tchaikovsky who the Russians love most, is a song widely used for nationals and is considered to only be handled well by Russians.

Amelia played the piano with so much confidence that there was no anxiety to be found. She played with a feeling of loneliness and expressed the complicated theme with an brilliant art.

With the piano's magnificent octave, she finished the 1st movement with liveliness and a grace accompanied with a brief touch and went toward the 2nd movement airily.

She expressed the Russian roughness with animation. From the 3rd movement, the key was her depiction like a winter wind sweeping a Russian field, raising the accent with the scale and powerful and fast octave with both hands to create a perfect climax.

The audience's storming cheers and judges' blank expressions. And the 5th curtain call indicated that she is the winner. Amelia could not even remember how many times she greeted the audience and their never ending clapping and cheering, while standing in front of a large picture of Tchaikovsky hanging in front of the venue.

Han Ye Jin was waiting backstage when she heard the overwhelming cheers and realized that Amelia had given an incredible performance. She also felt that her luck was getting farther away from her since her performance is to be right after.

As the first runner-up of the final, Danny who chose Shostakovich and Tchaikovsky's concerto, went on stage with a feeling of adversity. Unlike Amelia, it is his first time on a large stage and he even made a few small mistakes because he could not overcome his nervousness.

However, he was able to express Shostakovich's poignant despair as though screaming and Tchaikovsky's aching bittersweet feeling with an exact and calculated, detailed performance.

Amelia and Danny, who had completed the final safely, went around Moscow with a relaxed mindset.

Jun Hyuk finished rehearsal, and went back home to wait for the competition results to come out on the internet TV.

When the final ranking was confirmed after over 3 hours, Jun Hyuk cheered.

Amelia won in the piano section and Danny came in 3rd.

He considered calling to congratulate, but thought that they would be overwhelmed with interviews and just waited for them to contact him. They need to go on tour, starting with a gala concert.

Winning in the competition did not promise stardom, but it meant that their lives as professional musicians had commenced. The point had come for them to decide whether they will be continuing with school or not.

Amelia in particular, had entered the ranks of becoming a worldwide star with winning this year's competition. There is no reason for her to continue attending school.

When they arrived at the Juilliard theater the next day, orchestra members and singers started clapping to Jun Hyuk's entrance. Jun Hyuk was only surprised because he did not understand the cause.

"1st place for your girlfriend. 3rd place ranking for your roommate. Congratulations."

A Clayton cellist approached while smiling.

"Leave it. Is that something I should receive applause for?"

He thought of this kind of fuss as silly, but the clapping was not just for that reason.

"Did you by chance... see the interview?"

"No. I only checked the results."

"So I guess you haven't heard the bomb that Amelia set off."

"Bomb?"

The cellist let out a low whistle.

"You really have an impressive girlfriend. She needed to end by thanking you, but....."

He was positive that Amelia had caused an accident by the way the cellist's words trailed off.

"Why? What did she say?"

"Did you know that Amelia and Danny played the practice songs that you wrote for their preliminary assessments?"

"What? They played my songs during the preliminary assessments?"

"Yeah. We didn't know because the preliminary assessments aren't broadcasted but some reporter discovered that the composers are the same and asked the relationship.

That's when it started."

The cellist kept talking as if he is having fun with the gossip.

"Amelia said that you're her true teacher. The problem is that Professor Lenny Greenfield was there as well. I'm pretty sure the school flipped out."

She had said that to the face of the professor who discovered her and brought her to America. Beyond the betrayal that Professor Lenny Greenfield felt, she had created a headache of a situation that made Jun Hyuk the topic of conversation.

"Danny ended up saying something similar too. He said that he couldn't have dreamed of getting in the ranks if it hadn't been for you. Don't go to school for the time being. A ton of reporters will be waiting for you. Ha ha."

Jun Hyuk could not join in the laughter. He just hoped that the reporters would not come barging in all the way here.

Chapter 143

That night however, Jun Hyuk was surrounded by reporters in front of his house instead of the school. The reporters were Korean.

They had treated him as a wannabe young star who became famous through an audition program, but they fell in love with a star pianist in America. The girl also declared that he is her true teacher in a worldwide competition.

Stardom, love, winning, success, music. There is no better material for an article other than a story with a mix of these. When Jun Hyuk finally got past all of the questions that the reporters were asking and into his apartment, a call from Yoon Kwang Hun was waiting for him.

“Hey! Are you okay?”

“Huh?”

“It’s a mess here. What’s going on? Reporters have been here since this morning to ask about Amelia.”

“Reporters are outside my house here too. I’m going to go crazy too.”

When Jun Hyuk told him about Amelia’s interview, Yoon Kwang Hun burst out laughing.

“Ha ha. What an impressive girl. I don’t think you can handle her.”

“Well... I’m slowly getting used to her.”

“Anyway, don’t worry about it by yourself and talk it over with your lawyer if you’re uncomfortable with anything.”

“Okay. Don’t worry. The entrance to this condo is well controlled, so reporters won’t be able to come in.”

Jun Hyuk needed to drive his car around until the reporters calm down. It was at the

same speed as walking because it had not been long since he got his license.



A week before going to Salzburg, the deans of the 3 schools held a party for sponsored donations. Professor Roger Neill quietly called for Jun Hyuk, Laura, orchestra bandmaster, and the opera's male and female leads.

"It would be good for you to make an appearance at the support party tomorrow. What do you think?"

It is a party where the rich gather. If they attend this kind of party, they could get an opportunity. If they are lucky, they could end up with a strong supporter.

"Since you are the leads of this performance, the supporters will be curious."

It is customary for the stars of the school to attend a university party for sponsored donations. In public universities, the students who are called most often to these parties are the football players. The donors provide the scholarships that they receive.

The American college football league makes a tremendous amount of money. It is because of game admission fees, college team merchandise, and alumni donations.

The star of a conservatory is a promising musician. Laura Goldberg and the other students nodded in resolution. However, it was difficult for Jun Hyuk to accept the invitation easily.

Party culture itself is awkward and he felt like he is becoming something like a spectacle. When Jun Hyuk could not respond easily, Professor Neill started explaining slowly.

"Jun, I can guess why you're hesitating... If you're not thinking of going back to Korea after graduating from the conservatory, make sure you attend the party. This is part of this country's culture. Parties are a watering place in the west, whether it is America or Europe. You need to get used to it. Know that the New York Philharmonic's standing conductor attends more parties than he stands on stage."

These were words that Jun Hyuk could not help but nod to.

Jun Hyuk arrived at Pierre Hotel, the best hotel in Manhattan, and entered the ballroom, awkwardly pulling at the hems of his suit.

The party scene was not as Jun Hyuk imagined it would be. There were no old ladies pretending to be elegant in dresses and old men in suits, chatting while holding champagne glasses.

The men were in their 30s at the most in jeans and button-down shirts, and the women in dresses were young and beautiful with high heels.

The only people in suits are the professors and students of the conservatories.

Jun Hyuk grumbled in his uncomfortable stiff shirt while rubbing his neck.

“Damn. What is this? Why are we the only ones in suits? And are those people donors?”

“Ha ha. Jun. It’s been a while since the type of rich has changed. Those young people are rich IT people. They’re CEOs who make tons of money from creating softwares or websites. They’re completely different from the rich of the past. The amount that they donate is totally different too because there is a tremendous amount of taxes. I’m telling you that they add on one more 0 than the rich of the past do.”

“And we need to suck up to those young people?”

“No. Those people don’t even really know classical. I’m sure they aren’t interested in us.”

The orchestra bandmaster kindly explained to Jun Hyuk.

Only half of what the bandmaster said is right. The rich of the past are still the ones who sustain New York’s conservatories. The schools run on their continuous support. The emerging young rich gather when there is an event to throw their donations and disappear.

However, the bandmaster was completely wrong when he said that they would not be interested in the students. As soon as the students’ introductions ended, a lot of people gathered to Jun Hyuk.

“This student is the pianist on Stanley Clarke’s album, right?”

“That’s not it. Stanley Clarke featured on this student’s album. The lead in that album is definitely the piano.”

It could be unfortunate or very lucky, but these people are huge fans of rock, the blues, and jazz.

Jun Hyuk saw reassurance on the professors’ faces. They had been worried about what they would do if these people did not take interest in the students, but they showed enthusiastic reactions.

The dean of Clayton gave Jun Hyuk a look of thanks and approached him.

“This student is the jazz pianist and the conductor of our performance in Salzburg. He’s Clayton’s pride.”

“Conductor? He wasn’t a pianist?”

“Oho. So he was a maestro.”

The dean gave continuous praise because there is an increase in donations with an increase in interest of the rich.

Right around when the dean was becoming boring, Professor Roger Neill went on the stage and took the mic. He gave his lengthy greeting to the guests and called the two students up to the stage.

Jun Hyuk and Laura Goldberg greeted the guests with courtesy from Professor Neill’s side.

“These two stars are going to shake up Salzburg this summer.”

When Professor Neill’s introduction was over, they started a short performance that they had prepared. Even someone who is not interested in classical music would be in awe of Laura’s voice unless they are deaf.

As that awe increases, the wallets of the rich open more easily.

Laura Goldberg stood in front of the mic and Jun Hyuk sat at the piano. With Jun Hyuk’s calm piano, Laura’s beautiful voice flowed out.

“O mio babbino caro~”

As the representative song of Puccini’s opera Gianni Schicci, ‘O Mio Babbino Caro’ started, movement in the banquet hall halted. They do not know the title of the song, but it is one that they know even from listening to the first note. They had followed the golden rule that they need to perform a song that people would know.

Jun Hyuk got lost in her voice again and forgot that he is at a party. He shook off the feelings of discomfort and awkwardness, and focused on playing the piano.

As soon as her song ended, people yelled bravo (for male solos) and the people who knew anything yelled brava (for female solos).

The interest went from Jun Hyuk to Laura. Thanks to this, Jun Hyuk was able to escape from the theater and enjoy time to himself in the beautifully decorated front of the hotel.

That was only for a moment however. An old man with white hair approached the bench Jun Hyuk was sitting on, and sat next to him.

“So you like to be alone.”

“I tend to avoid places that are noisy.”

Jun Hyuk glanced at the old man through the side of his eye.

‘He can’t be... a reporter at that age.’

Jun Hyuk looked away from him.

“You need to know how to enjoy the limelight... Well, I’m sure you’ll get used to it slowly.”

“Do you know who I am?”

“Of course. My introduction is late. I’m Isaac Stern.”

“I’m Jun.”

Jun Hyuk took the old man’s hand.

“Do you have something to say to me?”

“I did, but let’s forget it for now. I became your fan today. Ho ho.”

“You’re saying me and not the diva who is the main today?”

“Because today’s the first time I was impressed by a piano accompaniment. I don’t know about those deaf people in that party, but the piano was far superior than the diva’s voice. It was good to listen to.”

The old man stood up from the bench.

“I wanted to make sure to thank you, but bothered you. Then have a good time.”

The old man who introduced himself as Isaac Stern, tipped his hat and bid him farewell.

Chapter 144

The plane to Salzburg, Mozart's city, was noisy like a college dormitory. It is a chartered plane where they did not have to be careful of other passengers.

The conservatory deans were pleased with the results from support that were beyond their expectations. One party attendant in particular delightfully lent his private plane to them.

"Laura's song must have been really great. This kind of situation is a first."

"I'll say. I heard that President Stern gave a check for \$500,000 at the party as well."

"Is he thinking of scouting Laura? He might be since he's lending out his private plane like this."

The professors seemed to be excited by the results beyond their expectations and the overwhelming interest in Laura.

"Of course he'll scout her. He'll keep an eye on this Salzburg performance. If he confirms that she can overcome the pressure of the stage, he'll hand over a contract right away."

"Stern Corporation is really quick with discovering rookies. Well... I'm sure that's why a third of classical greats use it as their management."

Jun Hyuk heard what the professors were saying in passing and did not think the name Stern strange, but he did not remember who it was.

Due to the private plane, they arrived in Salzburg without stopping in Vienna. Jun Hyuk went to the hotel he had reserved on the day that he decided to participate in the conductor auditions. The school reserved a hotel for the students, but Jun Hyuk wanted to stay on Getreidegasse street where Mozart's footprints lay.

Goldener Hirsch Hotel was built as a motel in the 15th century. It has been preserved well for about 600 years. It was reborn as a hotel through much remodeling, and it is still one of the most beloved hotels in Salzburg.

Jun Hyuk organized his luggage in the hotel and went out onto Getreidegasse street to enjoy the free time he was given until the next day.

The street was full of tourists because of the summer festival, but the Mozart goods outnumbering those tourists caught his eye more. Chocolate was a definite, but there were even irrelevant items like empty water bottles with Mozart's portrait on them.

The first place that Jun Hyuk headed is Mozart's birthplace.

Mozart's long baptismal name 'Johannes Chrysostomus Wolfgangus Theophilus Mozart' on it was impressive. Amadeus amadera means 'God loves' in French. It is said that Mozart stuck it on himself.

Countless items from Mozart's childhood are on display in his birthplace on Getreidegasse street. Among them are even Mozart's first clavichord (antecedent to the piano) and violin.

However, Jun Hyuk did not see the handwritten scores that he had so wanted to see anywhere. He asked the museum curator where he needs to go in order to see the handwritten scores.

The curator smiled brightly and started explaining amicably in fluent English.

"First, go to the airport. At the airport, you get a ticket to London, Paris, or New York. You can see them if you go to London's British Museum, Paris' Louvre, or New York's Metropolitan Museum."

"Excuse me? Then you're saying that they're not here right now?"

"We do have a few scores from his childhood, but they have not been conserved very well so they are being restored. It has been a few years."

Jun Hyuk frowned.

'Damn..... I was fooled.'



They did not stop practicing in Salzburg either. The scale is a lot larger because they were joined by the Mozarteum students and Professor Roger Neill's final inspections would go on until the day before the performance.

About a week after arriving in Salzburg, Danny came to the hotel.

"Jun!"

As soon as Danny found Jun Hyuk, he leapt and hugged Jun Hyuk to start dancing.

"You saw, right? I got in 3rd place. It's all thanks to you. It's a debt I can never repay. Thank you."

"Congratulations. All 6 runner-ups are at similar levels. The condition of that day is the problem. You did well."

"Oh right. You got Amelia's text?"

"Yeah. She said she's stopping in Prague for a performance before coming here."

Danny shook his head.

"I'm worried about you. Even for a South American girl, I've never seen such a fiery person like her. Her manager fit in another performance per a sponsor's request... There's no Queen of the Night like her. She made a huge fuss that she needs to get to Salzburg immediately..... What are you going to do?"

Danny's tone was of serious worry, not in jest.

"She's a tame cat in front of me. She's only a tiger in front of others."

"Really?"

Danny stared at Jun Hyuk in disbelief and Jun Hyuk's face turned red.

"Let's just say that's true. Whew."

Danny pat Jun Hyuk on the shoulder as he let out a long sigh.

“Right. What’s your itinerary like?”

The European tour for the over 20 runner-ups for each part in the competition needs to be over for them to return to America.

“I need to perform 3 times while here for the festival, and then I have to go to Vienna. After that, it’s all over once we tour Eastern Europe until August. How about you?”

“It’s over once we perform in 10 days.”

“Then I guess you’ll join us after that.”

“I won’t be able to not go, will I?”

Danny smirked. Jun Hyuk will also know well that he has no choice but to go. Danny pat Jun Hyuk’s shoulder again.

Danny went back to the dormitories for the runner-ups, and Jun Hyuk went to a cafe. It is a place called ‘Tomaselli’ that has been in business since the 1700s. It is said that Mozart also enjoyed going here, but Jun Hyuk did not believe these rumors anymore. All of the stores on Getreidegasse street say that Mozart was a regular there.

“Jang Jun Hyuk!”

He was walking along the street when he was certain that he had heard his name in Korean. He turned and someone ran into his arms.

“Professor. I... Hang on.”

Jun Hyuk managed to pry Professor Jeon Hye Jin off of his body.

“This punk. You should have called. What are you so busy with?”

“Ah, I’m sorry. The thing is.....”

“Forget it. That’s that, but what are you doing here? Are you here to perform?”

Professor Jeon Hye Jin was genuinely pleased with this unexpected encounter and could not stop smiling.

“Yes. It’s for a program called New York conservatory weekly. But why are you here, Professor?”

“Kid. I’m a known pianist of Korea. I’m invited every year. You underestimate me.”

“Oh of course not. It’s just so sudden.”

Professor Jeon Hye Jin took the hand of a tall girl standing next to her and brought her close.

“Oh right. Say hi. This is my student. Ah, she’s also performing this time.”

“Hello. I’m Han Ye Ji.”

“Ah, hello. I’m Jang Jun Hyuk.”

“This kid is a rising pianist in Korea right now. She won in the Spain Maria Canals Competition. She was really close in the Tchaikovsky Competition too. She’s a 6th place runner-up.”

“Ah I see. Congratulations.”

When Jun Hyuk greeted her, Han Ye Ji hid her surprise and held her hand out for a handshake.

“Thank you. But I had no idea that you would be that Jang Jun Hyuk. I just realized.”

Han Ye Ji’s eyes grew larger from the first time she saw Jun Hyuk in surprise.

“Excuse me?”

“I didn’t think that you would be that Jang Jun Hyuk who appeared on that audition program. And... this is actually the 2nd time we’re meeting, but I guess you don’t remember?”

It is the first time Jun Hyuk is seeing her face no matter how he tries to rack through his memory. He is certain that he has never met a young Korean pianist.

Suddenly, Professor Jeon Hye Jin clapped her hand.

“I see. It’s the 2nd time. Ha ha. What fate!”

Jun Hyuk did not know what they were talking about, and just looked back and forth at their faces.

“Jun Hyuk. Do you remember? The first day I met you?”

“Of course I remember it.”

“Then do you remember that a student pointed out the specialty in your piano playing at once?”

“Yes. I remember. She said that it was as if several people were playing instead of one. I was surprised too. Is this.....?”

“Yeah. Ye Ji was that student. I started teaching her properly from then. I basically found a hidden pearl thanks to you.”

Chapter 145

Professor Jeon Hye Jin was surprised twice on the first day she met Jun Hyuk. Once was because of Jun Hyuk and the other was because of Han Ye Ji.

Han Ye Ji had been bold and really came looking for Professor Jeon Hye Jin for the points.

“Since you got your A, are you thinking of not coming into my class from now on?”

“Professor, you told me to.”

Professor Jeon Hye Jin’s tone had been scary, but Han Ye Ji had said everything she wanted to. Professor Jeon Hye Jin was in such disbelief that she did not want to say more.

“Kids these days..... Oy. Go.”

When Professor Jeon Hye Jin waved for her to leave, Han Ye Ji carefully walked backwards.

“Oh right. But how did you know? About that kid’s piano?”

“I just did. It just sounded like the emotions changed too quickly.”

Professor Jeon Hye Jin had expected her to say, ‘I know the specialties of the pianists that Jun Hyuk played.’ But she said that she just knew.

Her heart started beating. Could it be that this student has potential that no one had yet discovered?

“Come with me.”

Professor Jeon Hye Jin took Han Ye Ji to the practice room. She spoke after having Han Ye Ji sit in front of the piano.

“Play. Recall the emotions that Jun Hyuk showed before.”

Han Ye Ji looked like she was on the verge of tears.

“Professor, I can’t play the piano like that Jang Jun Hyuk. If I were that good, I would have gone to study abroad already.”

“This girl! Who said to play it just like he did? I know that much as well that you can’t play the piano like he does. I’m just telling you to play anything while thinking of those emotions. Just do what you can!”

Han Ye Ji hesitated for a while after Professor Jeon Hye Jin’s scolding, took a deep breath, and calmed herself down.

As soon as her piano rang out, Professor Jeon Hye Jin’s heart started beating. After playing the piano for more than 10 minutes, Han Ye Ji took her hands off of the keyboard.

“I’m sorry Professor. I can’t do it. I’m not a genius like that kid. How could I capture the emotions of multiple pianists?”

Han Ye Ji looked at the keyboard as though tears would fall from her eyes. Professor Jeon Hye Jin only had one strong feeling from her piano. The feeling that she misses someone dearly was certainly delivered. That longing needs to develop more to end in a different kind of bliss, but she has not reached that yet. However, it just means that she has not learned it yet. Her ability to deliver such a performance with a lack of skills means that she is a born performer.

Professor Jeon Hye Jin’s hard face loosened and she spoke in a gentle voice.

“You said your name is Han Ye Ji?”

“Yes.”

“Listen to me carefully. I only give one person lessons, once a week for 2 hours. I usually don’t give private lessons, but her mother is ridiculously rich. So in the name of redistributing the wealth, I get paid to teach that kid with no talent.”

“Okay.”

She just blinked because she did not know what Professor Jeon Hye Jin was trying to say.

“But I’m going to start teaching you every day for 2 hours a day from now on. I’m your advisor started today. Got it?”

“Excuse me? Professor, I can’t do that. My family isn’t rich enough to handle such an expensive lesson fee.”

Han Ye Ji bolted up from the piano bench.

“You’ve hit the lotto. I’m teaching you for free.”

Professor Jeon Hye Jin sat Han Ye Ji down again and put her hands on the piano.

Han Ye Ji developed quickly enough to let the professor feel the happiness of teaching her.

“I see. Anyway, congratulations once again. For meeting a great teacher and for becoming a runner-up. Ha ha.”

If Professor Jeon Hye Jin wants to personally teach her, she must be a pianist with potential. Jun Hyuk committed her name to his memory.

“My standing is nothing. You do know that you became bigger news than the winner of the Tchaikovsky Competition this year, don’t you?”

“Ah, yes.”

“You’re the hot topic in Korea as well. There was already a lot of talk because 4 Korean people went up, but you added to that.”

He does not need her to tell him all of this as he already knows. Did the reporters not come looking for him in New York?

“But where’s that girlfriend of yours? Didn’t you come together? All of the runner-ups should have been gathered here.”

Professor Jeon Hye Jin looked around.

“She’s performing in Prague right now. She couldn’t get out of it because a sponsor set it up... She’ll be here soon.”

"I see. This kid... You're already playing around. Ho ho."

Professor Jeon Hye Jin poked Jun Hyuk's side and was happy as he blushed.

"Looks like you guys are performing Mozart's Magic Flute. Are you conducting it?"

"Yes. It happened like that."

"What do you think? Is it okay? You're fine to conduct it?"

"It's alright. There's nothing really special about it, but one of the sopranos is really impressive. I think she's going to become top news of this festival."

"She must be really impressive if you talk about her like that."

"Yes. She's only just 19 years old. She'll be able to reign as a diva for the next 20 years."

"Hey! Aren't you just 19 too? Where do you come acting like an adult? Ho ho."

Professor Jeon Hye Jin was going to hit Jun Hyuk's head, but her hand did not reach.

"I'm excited to get to see your conducting. Isn't it your debut in that field?"

"No need to be excited. I'm not performing. The actors need to do well."

"Anyway, let's see how our schedules work out and get dinner together."

"Yes, Professor. Please call me."

"Sure."

Han Ye Ji could not take her eyes off of Jun Hyuk as he said goodbye and walked away.

"He's more than you said."

"What is?"

"I didn't think much of it when you kept saying that he is good looking, but he really is handsome. He just looked pretty when he appeared on the audition program, but he looks completely different now."

“Ye Ji, don’t take a liking to him. You know he has a girlfriend. There’s no way people couldn’t know since she basically told the world not to touch him on broadcast. That Amelia girl really is impressive.”

In Professor Jeon Hye Jin’s eyes, Amelia does not lack anything. Looks, talent, and a bold personality.

“Professor, what did I do?”

“It looked like your eyes would shoot lasers out of them. If you want, you should give it a try. Doesn’t a ball go in even if there’s a goalkeeper?”

“It’s not like that. Why do you keep saying stuff like that?”

Han Ye Ji knows that the professor likes jokes like this, but she could feel her face flush.

“It’s weird if a girl isn’t attracted to a boy like that. I would’ve given my all to him too if I were just 30 years younger.”

“Professor.”

“What?”

“Because you need to be 30 years younger for it to be possible.”

Professor Jeon Hye Jin poked Han Ye Ji’s side.

Chapter 146

When Amelia arrived after her performance in Prague, it was clear that she was already a known pianist. People asked for her signature while she was walking around in Salzburg and unlike Danny, she had a performance scheduled every night.

Jun Hyuk was also in the middle of last practices, so the two of them felt like they would pass out whenever they arrived at their hotel.

“Jun, I think this semester is going to be my last.”

Amelia started talking when they were lying on the bed tired. She meant that she would be quitting school.

“Isn’t it a definite? It would be stupid for you to try to learn anything more at school. I expected it.”

“When the tour is over in August, I need to perform concerts for at least a year.”

Amelia is already receiving a rush of invitations to perform with orchestras all over the world. She is not being treated as a rookie who won in a competition, but as a complete pianist who has found her place.

The performance schedule would not be over after a year. If she releases a live concert album and the reaction to it is good, she will have to keep traveling to perform like a nomad.

“Are you okay?”

“With what?”

“You might not be able to see me for a year.”

Amelia stared at Jun Hyuk as she spoke. Jun Hyuk knew that the time had come for when Danny had told him to be careful with his words.

Jun Hyuk looked at Amelia for a while without speaking.

“I’m always going home. I’m always going to my boyfriend’s house.”

Jun Hyuk recited one line of German poet Novalis’ poem. He changed ‘father’ to ‘boyfriend’.

“Amelia. Your tour is just another journey for you to return to me. I’ll always be in the same place.”

When Jun Hyuk smiled at Amelia, she hugged him with tears in her eyes.

Jun Hyuk put his arms around her waist and knew that he had gotten over this dangerous moment safely and well.

In the last week of July, the weekly performances of large conservatories began.

All of the students watched the performances with their eyes wide open. There is no 1st or 2nd place. It is just a festival without eliminations.

However, the audience’s reaction. The evaluation of critics. The articles to be in the festival’s newsletters. These will tell them the clear ranking and who the winner is. This is not a festival but a fight.

They had thought that the European conservatories would be traditional compared to the open-minded American schools, but their performances were beyond expectation.

The European conservatories did not perform Mozart’s symphonies or concertos in the traditional way. They performed with such unconventional arrangements that Europe’s nobility would be surprised.

Electronic instruments were a given, they used drum sets instead of the timpani, and there was even a school that had the electric guitar next to the violin.

The Paris conservatory was the school to receive the most applause. They put on a European version of an animation of Don Giovanni on the screen behind the stage. The animation was a modern rendition of Mozart as a musical.

Unlike Mozart who based the humorous expression on the wrongdoings of the nobility, the animation was modeled after business that exploit Third World workers. It is a very French expression of a national revolution.

The unique part was that they performed to the character's song before the singers entered. There were a lot of arrangements made, and there was even an insertion of an entirely different song.

However, the audience applause let them know that it was a successful performance.

Summer festival newsletters praised the Paris conservatories' innovative performance highly. Now the focus went to the New York conservatories.

On the day of the New York conservatories' performance, Professor Roger Neill was backstage encouraging the anxious students very differently unlike he did in rehearsals to calm them down.

"Everyone calm down and just perform as you did in rehearsals. You have practiced enough to receive a lot of applause, so the performance is a success no matter what. Trust me."

Professor Roger Neill could not do more after giving his encouragement backstage. Once the performance starts, the students have to get through it with their own power.

"Jun, the director of this team is now you. I don't really have anything to say but... I'll leave them to you."

"Okay. Don't worry about it."

Jun Hyuk had already experienced performing in front of a full audience. He was more relaxed than Professor Roger Neill was. He called the members of the orchestra over to him in this relaxed state.

"Now we need to properly show them what we practiced. Let's show them a performance that even the singers will be surprised by."

"That's not a problem. Jun, just conduct well."

The bandmaster was also full of confidence.

"Alright. Today is the day that you can't lose track of my baton. Okay?"

The students of the 3 New York conservatories went out onto the stage feeling the bond between the schools.

With a dark stage, only the bright lights lit up the orchestra under it. When the members appeared, clapping exploded from the audience. A few moments after when Jun Hyuk entered wearing a tuxedo, the applause grew even louder. Jun Hyuk bowed lightly to the audience and met eyes with the members of the orchestra.

When the bustle of the audience calmed down, Jun Hyuk brandished the baton with power. He succeeded in capturing the audience with the power of Mozart's original song and the 7 minute overture.

When the overture ended, the audience could not take their eyes off of the stage in anticipation for the appearance of the actors. But the first song, 'Save Me!' was heard from the back of the audience and not from the stage.

Prince Tamino had appeared while performing from the rear of the audience. He had on a suit that was too large instead of grand prince's clothing, thick and full-rimmed glasses, a briefcase under his arm, and walked with a slump toward the stage. He had been changed into the average salary man from a prince. Laughter burst out from the audience. From the way he hands out flyers to the people in the audience, he is without a doubt a salesman.

When a large, monstrous snake is supposed to appear, the screen behind the stage lit up with a complicated graph covered in numbers. Prince Tamino shook in fear. The prince is afraid of the sales performance and not the snake. At this time, 3 chambermaids of the Queen of the Night appeared in two piece suits. The women looked to be Prince Tamino's employees. In the original, the chambermaids fall in love with the prince at first glance because he is so handsome. Now, he is a boss who bothers his employees who do not have good performance. The audience became a sea of laughter with the inconsistent stage.

The funny new hunter character 'Papageno' entered wearing clothing that bikers who worship Harley Davidson would. The chambermaids who need to get angry with him fall in love at first sight and cling to him.

The atmosphere of the entire opera changes with a costume change. Someone who does not understand German would think that this is a story about a weak salaryman, female superior who is great at her job, and the biker that the women fall for.

Of the people on stage, only Queen of the Night's daughter 'Pamina' was wearing the traditional dress. The villain Sarastro who kidnapped Pamina was dressed like Steve

Jobs in his trademark turtleneck, jeans, and glasses.

When Queen of the Night appeared on stage, the audience broke out in laughter and applause at the same time. Laura Goldberg was not wearing a scary witch's outfit, but skinny leather pants and a leather jacket that showed off her figure.

The audience's laughter turned into emotion because of her voice. The actors' tempo changed according to the constantly changing audience reaction. However, no one noticed the actors' wavering because the orchestra followed the tempo exactly.

When Queen of the Night sang her aria, she handed her daughter a pistol instead of a knife. The audience laughed at the gun, but they became lost in the coloratura that followed.

Actors who are beyond the audience's expectations and an impressionable performance. The actors ran around the audience and became one with them. Laura Goldberg's wonderful aria.

With the finale 'The day brightens soon' that even the supporting actors participated in, the lights on the stage turned off. When the performance ended, the audience exploded in applause. Most of their applause was directed to Laura Goldberg.

The costumes and stage background alone made Magic Flute, which recalls a myth or fairytale, into the story of a common society salaryman.

Art director Professor Roger Neill actively utilized the fact that the performers are college students. Even if the performance was too unconventional, it could be made up by emphasizing that it was carried out by college students. And because it is unconventional, it would capture the audience's attention and it was a performance that is faithful to the original. This performance's reigning points were Professor Neill's production and Laura Goldberg's voice.

Jun Hyuk knew that the performance was not a failure when the orchestra's greetings received a storm of applause. The students on top of the stage finally relaxed and smiled brightly at the audience.

Chapter 147

Professor Roger Neill went backstage with the students and did not hesitate with complimenting each and every student.

Professor Neill changed into comfortable clothes and opened his arms wide when he saw Jun Hyuk.

“Jun, my maestro! You did really well.”

Professor Neill went to Jun Hyuk and hugged him.

“Today’s best isn’t Laura, but you. It was really impressive.”

Professor Neill whispered something in Jun Hyuk’s ear. Most people who attended the performance remembered Laura, but people with the ear for it would certainly remember Jun Hyuk’s conducting.

Laura Goldberg was drinking beer and wine while enjoying the aftertaste of the stage, slowly went next to Jun Hyuk.

“Jun, today’s performance was really impressive.”

“It was the aria more than the performance. It was a great song that no one could criticize.”

“No. In the multiple times that I lost control of my emotions and made the tempo a mess, you covered that up. Not everyone can do that. I’m pretty sure I never experienced a performance like this even when we played at school.”

“The song was good, so I just followed it.”

It was not modesty. Jun Hyuk was so moved by Laura’s aria that he could not help but follow it.

Just like Jun Hyuk’s expectation that Laura would become a tremendous diva, all of the criticism written in the festival newsletter were about Laura Goldberg. They began

with praises and ended in admiration. All that was written about Jun Hyuk was one short line, 'An excellent performance so stable that it could have been conducted by a veteran.'

The expenses to have the students of the 3 New York conservatories stay in Salzburg was arranged until August 1st, three days after the performance. It had been planned so they could see the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra's performance that night. A student who wants to stay in Europe for the remainder of the summer break needs to settle it by their own means.

Most students needed to go back to New York. They do not have such relaxed lives that would allow them to hang out in Europe for vacation. They are students whose lives are run with lessons and practice.

Jun Hyuk packed his bags to meet Amelia who had gone to Eastern Europe first.

"Jun, we can't miss this concert for anything. We need to see it no matter what."

He received a sudden call from the bandmaster and went in front of the cafe. The bandmaster and a few students were waiting for Jun Hyuk while drinking beers.

"What's the big deal all of a sudden? What concert?"

"August 1st Berlin Philharmonic performance. Do you know who the conductor is?"

The bandmaster could not hide his excitement and his voice grew louder.

"I'm sure it's Sir Simon Rattle. He's the standing conductor right now."

"There's a special performance after. There's a performance by Sarill Petrenko right after."

"Huh? Why is he doing it? He's arranged to be the conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic starting in 3 years. Why is he already conducting?"

"That's why we can't miss out on an opportunity like this. Two maestros are conducting on the same stage."

Just as the bandmaster said, there is no performance more difficult to see. However, it overlaps with the main stage of Salzburg Festival's, the Vienna Philharmonic.

“Then we’re giving up the Vienna Philharmonic?”

“Of course. Can’t the Vienna performance be expected? The repertoire is obvious. But the maestro of the Berlin performance is Petrenko.”

The bandmaster’s expression showed that he is certain that the Berlin Philharmonic performance is the one that is much better.

Sarill Petrenko from Russia debuted first and upon moving to Austria at age 18, he studied conducting at Vienna School of Music. After, he gained experience in famous opera theaters all over the world like in Vienna, Paris, and New York.

He beat eminent competitors like the Boston Symphony, Birmingham Symphony, and Dresden music director, and was selected to lead the Berlin Philharmonic in his 40s.

The Berlin Philharmonic is famous for choosing its chief conductor in a democratic way with votes from the orchestra members and debates.

Jun Hyuk also leaned toward the Berlin Philharmonic where he compare the two greats on one stage.

“Fine. We’ll toss Berlin Philharmonic.”

Jun Hyuk wanted to find something new in the young Petrenko’s music.

“But did you buy tickets? Don’t we only have tickets to the Vienna Philharmonic?”

“Yeah Jun. Hurry up and give me your ticket too. We need to change them. Since the Vienna Philharmonic is popular, we’ll be able to change them easily.”

On the day of the performance however, there was no point to what the bandmaster said. As renowned as the Vienna and Berlin Philharmonics are, they cannot be compared to see who is inferior and superior. Since the 2 maestros are standing on the same stage however, the Berlin Philharmonic tickets are in higher demand.

“What do we do? We did get tickets but... they’re standing.”

The bandmaster avoided looking the other students in the eye and took out the tickets.

“We need to stand in the back of the audience to hear the concert.”

They made it so that they could have more guests in to enjoy the performances. Every concert sells about 30 standing tickets.

“Hey! Mozart’s Symphony No. 40, Piano Concerto No. 20. It’s an hour and a half if we want to listen to all of this. And didn’t they say there’s a special performance? So we need to stand for 2 hours?”

“If the music is good, 2 hours go by in a flash. What’s the problem?”

The students complained to the bandmaster, but the tickets were already exchanged. The bandmaster quickly handed out the tickets and went into the concert hall.

The center concert hall, which is in the middle of the festival, is where the Vienna Philharmonic performance opened. It can hold the largest audience and it is the location for Salzburg Festival’s main program. They are taking advantage of the power and benefits of their homeground.

Berlin Philharmonic’s performance opened in the Hohen Salzburg concert hall.

There was even a shortage with standing room, so people were still outside trying to scalp tickets. Jun Hyuk and his group leaned on the wall and waited for the concert to start.

Chapter 148

When the standing conductor Simon Lettle slowly walked out onto the stage, there was thunderous clapping and whistling in the concert hall.

Simon Lettle was appointed as the successor to the great 'Claudio Abbado'. Sir Lettle did receive a lot of criticism that he had used the Berlin Philharmonic as an instrument to perform in the German Romanticism.

However, he transformed the classical and romantic Berlin Philharmonic into modern music with his skills.

The Berlin Philharmonic that he promoted so enthusiastically succeeded in the internet broadcast 'Digital Concert Hall,' making it a corporate net with a lot of profits. He was assessed exotically as the conductor with the best business mind and that he is a unique person.

The first song of the concert, Mozart's Symphony No. 40, ended and the audience was full of hype. It is the song that Jun Hyuk performed for the conductor auditions. If his performance was an uneasy racing, Simon Lettle only performed the racing without the uneasiness. It allowed them to experience the danger of crashing on the track and the deafening roar of the cars racing by.

Sarill Petrenko appeared on the stage to the sound of the applause. Sarill Petrenko hugged the conductor lightly and sat in front of the piano. The audience broke out in applause again.

"Look. I told you I was right! This is the first time in more than 10 years that Petrenko is playing the piano."

The students could not hide their surprise. He once received the high praise as a pianist that he is the second coming of Chopin, but he was rarely seen playing the piano once he went into conducting. Their legs were stiff from standing all the way in the back for about 40 minutes, but their exhaustion disappeared completely once Petrenko sat in front of the piano. Everyone forgot about the pain in their legs and got lost in Petrenko's performance.

As it is not an ordinary concert, they had selected 2 of Mozart's songs that would be suitable for a public participating in a festival.

When the piano symphony ended, the 2 maestros stood next to each other and bowed to the audience. With the last special performance left, the audience imagined that Simon Lettle might play the piano again.

Simon Lettle took the mic that the host gave him.

"Next is the special performance, which I'm sure you all are most curious about. I struggled with all of my strength, but this is a monstrous song that is like drinking something bitter. However, our Berlin Philharmonic succeeded with the divine maestro Petrenko."

The audience did not know what he meant by monstrous, but they applauded to the words that it was a success. Simon Lettle handed the mic and baton to Sarill Petrenko, and went behind the stage.

Sarill Petrenko stood on the podium and the audience got lost in their excitement. They felt like they had been chosen to see what could only be seen in 3 years.

Sarill Petrenko calmed down the clapping and cheering audience and put the mic to his mouth.

"Ladies and gentlemen. Thank you. I'm sure you've all guessed, but all that is left is a very special performance."

The audience was in a stir at the mention of a special performance. It meant that it is not a known song, so that the conductor must take the mic himself and explain it to the audience.

"Now, we will be giving a very important performance for the Berlin Philharmonic. It has never been performed and we do not know who the composer is. Maestro Sir Lettle said that it is monstrous, but it is like a map to a treasure island with only the 1st sheet."

When he said treasure island, Jun Hyuk and the students in the back of the concert hall started cheering, bringing the hall into excitement again. The first performance of this music. The opportunity to see a premiere is a chance that will never come again.

The maestro smiled brightly at the audience and continued his explanation.

“Truthfully, this song is a masterpiece that has gone back and forth between many maestros I admire for the past year or so.”

The audience grew more curious at the word masterpiece.

“And I don’t know if I’m allowed to say this, but it was something like an unspoken competition between conductors of several orchestras around the world. It was about who would be the first to get this song out to the world. That is how difficult this song is to perform.”

The maestro turned around and signaled to the orchestra members. When they received the signal, more than half of them put on headphones.

The audience stirred up again at this strange action.

“Listening to this song is pain itself. It is to the point where it is almost impossible for us, the performers, to play the song. That’s why we have to resort to strange methods like this.”

The audience began to whisper again. What difficult techniques were necessary that they even use the expression of pain? And that from the top class Berlin Philharmonic.

“Ladies and gentlemen. If this song is too hard to listen to, you may get up and leave at anytime. It is not an issue of courtesy. It is a song where I can understand why you cannot stay to listen. I guarantee that there won’t be more than 10 people who stay to listen to this 10 minute song all the way to the end.”

The audience thought that another type of modern music would appear. Even with the premiere of Igor Stravinsky’s masterpiece, half of the audience had left in the middle of the performance.

This is not the 19th or 20th century however. This is the 21st century when even silence is recognized as music. The audience thought that the maestro’s explanation had been severely exaggerated.

They just expected it to be that difficult of a song.

“The title written on the score is Symphony No. 1 in A Major, but we the conductors

created a subtitle. It is 'Inferno'."

Inferno, meaning hell's fire. What kind of song could it be that it appears with the subtitle Inferno? The audience gulped.

"What do you think? Isn't it an excellent choice? This is the moment that we are premiering an unknown composer. And by the Berlin Philharmonic."

The bandmaster who had exchanged seats at the Vienna Philharmonic into standing tickets felt like his decision had been justified by this moment.

Jun Hyuk's face was full of anticipation as well. It is a surprise and a happiness to listen to a totally new form of modern music. What he could not understand still, was why more than half of the performers would need to wear headphones.

What they could expect is the difficulty of the tempo. Is the beat so hard that they need guidance from a metronome like a drummer? Or is it a temporary solution to make up for the lack of time to practice?

When he had caught the tail of the question, the performance began.

Jun Hyuk meant to lean on the wall and relax while enjoying the music. When the first measure flowed out however, he went weak and sat on the ground. The music stirred in his head without having to listen to it.

As the performance continued, the music became overwhelmed by the noise. No, the music and noise from the audience mixed to the point of indistinction.

The uncomfortable moaning and swearing that came from all over the audience, and the sound of people slamming their seats to leaving grew louder.

"Wooo!"

"Stop!"

"Dies ist keine musik!"

The ones who cover their ears and leave silently are the patient music lovers. They are leaving while showing the last courtesy. Most were ragging and swearing. A few even spit on the ground and left the concert hall.

A few people from Jun Hyuk's group had already left the hall and the bandmaster, who had been showing the most patience, pulled on Jun Hyuk's hand.

"Jun, let's go. This is insane. This isn't music. I think I'm going to puke."

Jun Hyuk took his hand out of the bandmaster's. The bandmaster looked at Jun Hyuk for a moment and could not take anymore, running out.

Not even 5 minutes had passed when the hall was empty. When the 10 minute performance ended, there were only 5 people in their seats as the maestro had ensured and they were sitting with frowns on their faces.

The remaining 5 people are not ordinary people, but reporters on assignment. They had endured the performance in order to write their articles. The performance ended, but conductor Sarill Petrenko was gripping the podium handrails and panting.

The performance was only 10 minutes, but the conductor, performers, and reporters could not speak for more than 10 minutes in order to catch their breaths. When the concert hall was full of silence, conductor Petrenko coughed and turned to the audience.

When he bowed, the only person standing all the way in the back of the hall clapped.

Surprisingly, he is a white-haired elderly man. Jun Hyuk, who was still sitting on the ground, looked at the old gentleman, but could not tell who he is. He does look familiar though.

When the orchestra members and conductor left the stage, the reporters who had stayed in their seats until the very end also left. The old gentleman who had clapped, got up slowly and walked with difficulty.

Jun Hyuk could not move until the theater was completely empty.

Chapter 149

The first symphony he wrote. And a song that he had been forgetting. Now, it is a song that he wants to erase completely. That music had been spread among conductors without him knowing. How had the score been passed around?

Its premiere had been by the Berlin Philharmonic, even if it is a failed performance where not many people had stayed to listen all the way through.

He was at a loss for what to do. Jun Hyuk felt like a diary he had written in his immature youth had been displayed for all to see. Does he have to say that he is the owner of that diary? It seemed as though it would be better to hide this fact, but he wanted to meet the maestro who evaluated his song so highly and ask his reasoning. He also needed to know where he got the score.

Someone says that it is monstrous and someone says that it is a treasure map. Whether it is a monster or a treasure map, it means that it is that rare. Jun Hyuk picked himself off the ground and left the theater.



“I’m sorry, but only officials are allowed to enter here. What are you here for?”

The backstage entryway was blocked by 2 sturdy guards. Usually, a lot of fans would have been blocking this passage but even the adoring fans had turned away from them after today’s uncomfortable performance.

“I would like to meet Maestro Sarill Petrenko.”

Jun Hyuk spoke carefully, but the 2 guards waved him away.

“Sorry. Fans cannot enter.”

“Then can you relay a message?”

“Sure. What would you like for me to tell them?”

The 2 guards know everything about today's performance. Of Berlin Philharmonic's performance, empty seats is unimaginable. They performed modern music that is that strange and they thought that because of this, the fans are full of anger.

Is this young kid trying to say that he is an adoring fan to have them deliver a rotten egg to the maestro?

"Tell him that the person who wrote Inferno would like to meet him."

The guards blocking the entrance looked at each other. Inferno? They did not know what this meant.

"What? Inferno? What is that?"

"Hm... Then tell them that it's the person who wrote the last song performed today."

As soon as he said the person who wrote the last song, their eyes bulged. They did not know the subtitle of a song called Inferno, but they at least knew that the composer of today's last song was unknown through eavesdropping.

"Is... Is that true?"

"Yes. I'm not an idiot who would lie about something that could be caught right away."

"Wait... Wait here for a moment, please."

One of the men ran in and the other person kept looking at Jun Hyuk in wonder.

Jun Hyuk avoided the guard's uncomfortable stare and scratched the carpet with his foot. His heart was still beating.

He could hear noisy footsteps from inside the passage. Two maestros were running ahead and the orchestra members could be seen behind them.

As soon as the guard pointed to Jun Hyuk, Petrenko went so close to him their faces could touch. He put his hand on Jun Hyuk's shoulder and asked,

"Is it true?"

"Excuse me?"

“Is it true that you are the composer of Inferno!!”

He could not calm his excitement and raised his voice as if out of anger.

“Yes.”

Jun Hyuk responded with a trembling voice, and Petrenko pushed his hair away.

“How... how... how could this be.”

Petrenko was not the only one. The members who followed him could not hide their shock either. To think that this Asian youth wrote that monstrous song!

Everyone stared out blankly in the lobby of the concert hall.

“Maestro. Instead of standing around here, we should go in and talk. There might be other people around.”

One of the members spoke and Petrenko and Jun Hyuk, surrounded by the members, returned backstage.

Someone gave Jun Hyuk a cup of coffee. He wet his dry throat and looked around. Unlike ordinary backstages, there were no bottles of champagne or wine.

It is a definite to have things to celebrate the end of a performance with, but there were only a few cups of coffee. It was that difficult of a performance and they did not even have the state of mind to drink and enjoy themselves.

As soon as Jun Hyuk drank all of his coffee, Maestro Petrenko sat across from Jun Hyuk.

They sat across from each other, but they were encircled by the orchestra performers. The person they had been so curious about... To meet the composer who had caused them so much pain.

Everyone had mountains of questions to ask him, but confirmation came before questioning. They did not take their suspicious gazes off of Jun Hyuk. It is a song that brought all of the pain of the world together to explode all at once.

The conductor and performers had been certain that the composer was a veteran who was on his last leg of life. The person in front of them however, was at most a 20 year

old youth.

Petrenko seemed to have calmed down a lot from when he was in the passage. Sir Simon Lettle watched them quietly from a short distance away. This is the first time that the composer and performer are meeting. There are a lot of questions he would like to ask, but it is right that he waits.

“Why don’t you tell us who you are first?”

“Sure. My name is Jun Hyuk Jang. I am a student at CH School of Music.”

“New York’s Clayton-Hoffman?”

“Yes.”

They knew that he had participated in the conservatory weekly program of the Salzburg Festival.

“Magic Flute? Did you perform? Or are you just visiting?”

“I conducted the orchestra.”

A low sound came from the performers around them. He has the basics down.

“Can I ask how old you are?”

“I’m 19 years old, a sophomore.”

Petrenko remembered that it has been over 1 year since he had possession of this score. He knew that the score had been making rounds with conductors for 2 years.

“Then when did you write this song? Before enrolling in school?”

“Yes. I remember writing it about 3 years ago.”

Phew!

Huah!

Just 16 years old?

There was shouting and whistling from around them. Everything they had expected and had been sure about were wrong. It was difficult for them to accept this nonsensical situation. One of the members was impatient and asked what everyone had on their minds. It is hard to keep their courtesy to Maestro Petrenko.

“This is just the 1st sheet. Is this all of it? What about the rest? Is there more? Is it unfinished?”

“No, it’s complete. There are 4 parts.”

Oh my god.

They started murmuring again. They had even used ear plugs and headphones. They only heard the metronome in the headphones. They had barely enduring 10 minutes by blocking out their fellow musicians. But it is just $\frac{1}{4}$.

Petrenko looked around, made everyone be quiet, and asked the most important question next. The answer to this would tell them everything. If he really is the composer or not.

“How was our performance today? I would like to hear an honest evaluation from the composer.”

“I learned that the composer is not allowed to say anything once the score has left his hands. You interpreted it as the maestro, and didn’t you perform to that interpretation?”

It is not the response that they were expecting, and it is too out of the textbook. This is why they cannot get what they want. Petrenko spoke again,

“Fine. Then I’ll change the question. If you the composer were a conductor, how would you have performed it?”

The words were changed, but he is basically asking the same question. Jun Hyuk’s assessment of today’s performance. Jun Hyuk realized that Petrenko wants to hear the response no matter what.

Jun Hyuk thought of the performance and spoke after organizing his thoughts for a moment.

“Hm... I thought that it might have been too direct. It seems you focused only on the pain itself. I did not hear the desire of the person experiencing that pain.”

“The desire of the person experiencing the pain? Specifically?”

Petrenko’s eyes grew wide and the members gulped. Sir Simon Lettle’s heart started beating as well.

“I want to hurry up and end this pain. If it won’t end quickly, I’d rather pass out and escape the pain. Those wishes have been left out. I do think that this could happen because you only had the 1st part to go off of. If I had conducted it, I would have expressed the desire to escape the pain rather than the physical feeling of that pain.”

As soon as Jun Hyuk’s response ended, Maestro Petrenko bolted up from his seat.

“He’s right. This is the person! This is without a doubt the composer. I’m sure of it!”

Chapter 150

For most people listening to this song for the first time, it is nothing but extreme noise. This song is noise that is difficult to listen all the way through to the end. However, this kid heard it for the first time and had an interpretation of it. It is an impossible response unless it is from the composer.

Petrenko looked behind him and called someone over,

“Maestro Giavelli. What do you think? Isn’t it obvious?”

Maestro Giavelli approached Jun Hyuk slowly.

“Are you Korean?”

“Yes.”

“So you are.”

Maestro Giavelli is the elderly gentleman who had stayed until the end and clapped. That is when Jun Hyuk remembered who the man is. He is the maestro who used to lead the San Francisco Philharmonic. It is no wonder he seemed familiar.

“The person who gave me the score for this song first is my student and he’s Korean. He came across your score by chance as well, but he said that he wasn’t able to find the composer.”

The first source of the score is Korea. The time and location of the appearance of the score matches up exactly. That and Jun Hyuk’s evaluation of the performance.

Everyone backstage finally believed that Jun Hyuk is the composer.

“You said that a Korean gave you the score?”

Since he said that it was a student, he is sure that it is not Yoon Kwang Hun. Then could that mean Yoon Kwang Hun threw away his score? There is no way that could have happened. He keeps Jun Hyuk’s scores and considers them worth more than money.

He takes care of them and stores them with a humidistat that would only be seen in a museum. He would not have shown it to others either. If he had, the composer would not be unknown.

“Ah, it’s not the original. He found a printout somewhere and brought it to me.”

Maestro Giavelli smiled slightly at Jun Hyuk’s surprised expression. The young composer does not know where his score was leaked either. There is no reason to wonder about that though. Everything was already revealed.

There is something that no one backstage had asked Jun Hyuk. That is the background of making this song. No one asked why he had created such a song and what he had wanted to express.

It is a question that would have come out if the composer was old. When everyone laid eyes on Jun Hyuk however, they could only guess. They do not know what kind of past he had, but his ability to write such a song is evidence that he has experienced indescribable pain. They could not bring up that painful past on purpose.

Jun Hyuk shook off thoughts about the original score and said why he had come backstage.

“Honestly... I’m curious about your opinion. There are 3 maestros here and the Berlin Philharmonic members, who are seen as the best in the world, so I think you can solve what I am curious about.”

When Jun Hyuk spoke carefully, everyone turned their attentions to him again.

“Can you tell me what my music is like?”

The 3 maestros looked at each other.

“I guess we can say it like this.”

Marco Giavelli, who had seen Jun Hyuk’s music first and had thought about it the most, started giving his opinion.

“Modern music, which started in the latter half of the 19th century, constantly throws the question – what is music? And little by little, musicians appeared to answer that question... We went past listening to music and enjoying it with emotions, to exploring

its nature. But Inferno is...”

Marco Giavelli stopped speaking as though he had suddenly thought of something.

“Oh right, what do you think of the subtitle ‘Inferno’? Is it okay?”

“Yes, it’s perfect. When I was writing that song, I did not know the word ‘inferno’. If I had known it, I think I would have titled it that.”

“That’s a relief.”

He had a satisfied expression and continued with his opinion on Jun Hyuk’s essential question.

“Anyway, I think that Inferno isn’t asking the nature of music but the role of music. The question up until now. The question has moved from ‘What is music?’ to ‘Until where is the role of music possible?’ Could there be a role for music that causes pain just by listening to it?”

Jun Hyuk found Marco Giavelli’s explanation more interesting than his own music. He respected that this man could have such thoughts.

“If there is, is it something that is necessary for humans? If it is not needed, is there a reason for creating that music? It brings up these never ending philosophical questions.”

Jun Hyuk thought of the saying, interpretation over dreams. A deep interpretation that he had not thought of. There are times when the value of art is decided on the interpretation of it. As there are more people in tune with that interpretation, the more it is recognized as a work of art.

“I think that your song Inferno is important because it causes a cycle of never ending questions. The young maestro, Petrenko, also put this performance on stage to throw that question out to the world.”

Marco Giavelli was telling Jun Hyuk that the shock surrounding his song will not have disappeared yet. It has been performance and since the composer appeared, it will inevitably become more news-worthy.

“So the intentions of the composer are not important. Inferno is a song that I wrote

for no particular reason when I was younger.”

Jun Hyuk was embarrassed that they were giving such a high assessment of his song.

“I have another opinion.”

Petrenko had been quietly listening to Marco Giavelli’s opinions, when he spoke,

“Yes. I would like to hear it.”

“These are opinions that say we cannot say it is not music. There are people who say that it is nothing but noise and no matter what the intentions for making it were, the results are too violent. That’s why there are a lot of people who say that it such not be included in the category of music.”

Jun Hyuk made it himself, but thought that there is a need to take a look at it objectively.

“I see.”

Neatly solved questions and an assessment of his music. Jun Hyuk forgot about the awkwardness and embarrassment he felt when he first came backstage.

“I feel relieved. It’s a song that I had completely forgotten about... I don’t know how to thank you for giving me such a clear evaluation of it.”

Jun Hyuk got up from his seat and owed to the maestros and Berlin Philharmonic members.

“I took too much of your time when you’re so busy. Then I’ll be going.”

However, Jun Hyuk could not go backstage. None of the people surrounding him, cleared a path for him to leave.

“Hang on. What are you doing?”

The person blocking him with his arms was Petrenko.

“Ah, I’m sorry but I’ll be going now. I need to go to Budapest early tomorrow morning.”

Jun Hyuk spoke in apology, but Petrenko did not get out of his way.

“You can’t go now. There’s still a lot that we need to talk about. How can I just send you away like this?”

“Of course I would like to speak more with you three, but the situation.....”

Petrenko and Jun Hyuk suddenly became awkward. Petrenko cannot hang on to someone who has a reason for going back. And Jun Hyuk feels bad that there is more to say, but he only asked what he needed to.

Sir Simon Lettle resolved this awkward situation.

“It isn’t three. What are you going to do if there are 6 people? I mean to include the conductor of the Vienna Philharmonic.”

Sir Simon Lettle shook the cellphone in his hand.

“I told all of the conductors in Salzburg to gather. No one hesitated when I said that the composer of Inferno appeared. Are you still going to leave?”

Jun Hyuk stared blankly at the cellphone. What could be happening right now? Is he saying that over 10 of the best conductors in the world are gathering here because of him?

“If the orchestra members come as well, that’s hundreds of people. I don’t know what you have going on, but don’t you think it’s too much to disappoint so many people?”

Sir Simon Lettle smiled at Jun Hyuk in jest, and Jun Hyuk took out his phone. He would need to send Amelia a text.

If he tells her that he is with the 3 maestros, she will not be angry but be happy for him as though it had happened to herself.

Petrenko looked at Jun Hyuk’s phone through the side of his eye and tilted his head.

“Sorry but... are you texting Amelia? The pianist that I know? Amelia LaMarque?”

“Yes.”

“Well... Was there a performance with you two scheduled in Budapest? This is uncomfortable. I wanted to spend a few days with you.....”

It seems that Petrenko thought they were putting on a performance together as conductor and pianist because he does not know their relationship. Since they are students of the same school, it is not a far off guess.

“Ah, no that’s not it. It’s not a performance, but... she’s actually my girlfriend. We were going to meet in Budapest.”

Jun Hyuk’s face flushed in embarrassment.

“What? Amelia is your girlfriend? Then are you saying that you’re the Jun she spoke about in an interview after the Tchaikovsky Competition?”

Jun Hyuk is like an onion, with layer on layer. The people backstage gathered to him again upon this new side of him.

Chapter 151

“Yes. Everyone at school calls me Jun.”

“Ah, you said that your name is Jun Hyuk Jang. I see. I didn’t even imagine that this was the same person.”

Petrenko looked at Jun Hyuk and thought of the interview that Amelia gave.

“Then you’re the Jun who released a jazz album with Stanley Clarke?”

“Yes. How do you know that?”

“What do you mean how do I know? Amelia’s winning comments were really fun. That she learned the real piano from her boyfriend. That her boyfriend is her only teacher. It was the most bizarre interview for a winner. The media even introduced you as a jazz pianist because you released an album with Stanley Clarke.

Petrenko looked at Jun Hyuk in a new light upon the realization that he is a competent pianist. One of the orchestra members came close to Jun Hyuk.

“I’m your fan. I was so surprised when I heard your piano on that album... It’s hard to hear such a free piano even in jazz.”

“You listen to jazz as well?”

This time, Jun Hyuk looked surprised. It is hard to imagine a solemn violinist of the Berlin Philharmonic listening to jazz.

“Why? You think we only listen to classical? We like jazz and pop too. You think we only like Beethoven? We like the Beatles too. Ha ha.”

The violinist whispered in Jun Hyuk’s ear.

“This is actually a secret, but my favorite female singer is Madonna, not a soprano who sings arias.”

While everyone was surprised by this new side of Jun Hyuk, Simon Lettle said something to hurry everyone,

“There there. Let’s hurry back to the hotel. We need to empty this concert hall... Those guys are gathering to the hotel right now. If we make them wait, they’ll make a huge fuss.”

Sir Simon Lettle kept talking on his phone from a distance, and approached Jun Hyuk.

“Maestro, what do you think about going back to the hotel.....?”

“Yeah. The maestros are going to the hotel that our Berlin Philharmonic is staying at. We reserved one of the banquet halls. Everyone is going to meet there. Oh right, you cancel your flight and switch hotels. Don’t you need to check out in the morning anyway?”

It is evident that this maestro is the business type from the way that he organizes their matters within moments.

“No. I’ll call my manager, so tell him where you’re staying. He’ll take care of everything. You can just move with me.”

Sir Lettle pushed Jun Hyuk’s back to try to leave when his phone rang.

As soon as Jun Hyuk picked up the phone, he heard Amelia’s excited voice.

Jun! What are you talking about? What do you mean you’re with 3 maestros?

“Yeah. I’ll tell you more later. Anyway, I’m with them now.”

It’s a good thing, right? Did you meet them because of the Magic Flute that you conducted?

“No. It’s because of something else. I don’t think I’ll be able to go tomorrow, so I’ll leave the day after tomorrow in the morning.”

Okay. Since you said that it’s a good thing...

“May I intercept?”

Petrenko came to Jun Hyuk and took the phone.

“Ah, Amelia? I’m Petrenko. We’ve performed together before, haven’t we?..... Yeah. That Petrenko. Ha ha. I think I’ll need to borrow your great boyfriend for a few days. Will it be okay?..... Of course. I’ll return him very healthy, so don’t worry about it..... Alright, and we should adjust our schedules to perform together again. I think the positions have changed now so I have to ask you for the favor. Ha ha.”

Petrenko did not stop laughing and gave the phone back to Jun Hyuk.

“You were going to run away after just one day? We can’t let that happen. Since your girlfriend has allowed it, you’re staying with me for the time being. Are you going to leave after just talking? We have to have a conversation with music. Don’t you think so?”

The performers who were waiting after the concert were pleased as if they were just now enjoying its aftertaste. They felt like it had been a successful concert even though not one member of the general audience had remained until the end.

There are also people who have not come out of their shock. A reporter who had endured the nightmarish 10 minutes had stuck to them, and checked to make sure the recorder in his hand was functioning well.

He is not a formal reporter, but a freelance college student majoring in journalism who had volunteered for the Salzburg Festival newsletter.

While everyone was forgetting about this college student, he was guessing that the recorder he held in his hand is like a winning lottery ticket.



The Berlin Philharmonic is staying at the Intercontinental, in the center of Salzburg. When they entered the hotel banquet hall, it was already set up for a party as per Sir Simon Lettles orders. Even though it was a last-minute request, they had prepared the best champagne, Veuve Clicquot Ponsardin.

They could not tell if it was the power of the Berlin Philharmonic or Sir Simon Lettles as British royalty, but it is obvious that they are receiving special treatment from the hotel. The hotel paid special attention in particular because the guests are maestros

who lead famous orchestras.

The conductors who came in one by one were only focused on 2 things. Whether or not the Berlin Philharmonic had really performed Inferno, and if the composer had really appeared.

This season's guest conductor of the Vienna Philharmonic, Patrick Quinn, must have come immediately after the concert because he was still in his tuxedo. Strangely, the Vienna Philharmonic does not have a principal conductor. Every season since 1933, the orchestra members select a guest conductor.

"Goodness! He's at least 200 years younger than I had imagined."

Maestro Patrick Quinn's reaction upon seeing Jun Hyuk for the first time was not very different from that of the Berlin Philharmonic's.

"Maestro Petrenko, is it true?"

"Yes, I'm sure. This young friend is the composer."

Patrick Quinn looked at Petrenko and shook his head.

"No, not that. I mean, did you really succeed in performing Inferno. Is that true?"

Petrenko scratched his neck and did not admit or deny it.

"Since we took shortcuts and Jun the composer said that it was almost a success, it's hard to say."

"So it's true that more than half of the performers had to wear headphones. Ha ha. That's innovative."

Patrick Quinn laughed heartily and gathered all of the conductors to the center.

For Jun Hyuk, it did not seem like reality that he was shaking hands with the best conductors in classical music. To have 16 maestros gathered in one place? And that the reason for their being there is none other than himself?

There is no doubt. All 16 maestros are looking at him.

Jun Hyuk told them everything. He composed Inferno at age 16 and then enrolled in CH School of Music. The story of how he came to record an album with Stanley Clarke at LA Sound. About Amelia and Danny at the Tchaikovsky Competition.

Lastly, the performance of Magic Flute at the Salzburg Festival to today's events.

The maestros regretted that today's performance had not been recorded. It is ironic that they could not get a single recorded file in the day of media. It is uncertain who would be able to perform this song again.

Everyone had imagined the sound while reading the score, but they had lost the opportunity to hear Inferno played on instruments.

When they tried to move on from Jun Hyuk to Inferno and philosophical questions on music, someone spoke to Jun Hyuk,

"Jun, I heard that there are 4 parts to Inferno. Are you going to reveal all of them? I'm asking because I don't think anyone is able to bring it up. If possible, now would be okay too."

Everyone paid attention to Marco Giavelli's sudden question.

"I don't know. You assessed Inferno highly, but I'm still not certain that it has that kind of worth."

"Didn't you say it yourself? Once the score leaves the composer's hands, he is no longer allowed to interfere. It is up to the performer to pass judgment, not you."

"That is true, but it feels like I'm revealing an immature act of my youth that I wanted to hide."

Marco Giavelli saw Jun Hyuk's uncomfortable expression and did not push it further. He only said something out of experience,

"If that's what you think, there's nothing we can do. However, think about the people who are gathered here. Inferno is straightforward, but who would have come to see you if they thought that it was immature? There are a lot of cases where music that shows simple emotions are masterpieces. You'll know that one day."

"I'll think about it a bit. Thank you, maestro."

Chapter 152

Even if someone is lauded as a maestro, he is just another performer who plays an instrument called an orchestra. He cannot force a composer to release a work that he does not want to. Marco Giavelli could say it because he is speaking from a fan of music who stepped down from active duty.

While everyone was clucking at their regret, Petrenko stepped in.

“Then I’m sure we’ll be able to hear your songs that are not immature?”

“Excuse me?”

“Then? You’re just going to keep letting us drink? You have to donate at least \$10,000 to have dinner with the maestros here. You have to let us listen to at least one of your songs to make the ends meet.”

All of the greats in the banquet hall burst out in laughter and urged Jun Hyuk as if they had all been waiting.

“What are you doing? Isn’t the piano waiting for you? If you don’t want to play the piano, the orchestra members here can lend you whatever instrument you need. Or do you want to conduct?”

Jun Hyuk went to the grand piano in the banquet hall.

“It’s not immature, but I’m worried it won’t be worth \$10,000 at the least.”

“If you think it’s not enough, you can play 16 in a row. Ha ha.”

When Petrenko was done laughing, Jun Hyuk started playing the piano.

A bass ridden with anxiety and fear started and became a grandiose piano. The bass outlined the motif and the treble only played the accompaniment role. The motif moved from the bass to treble and after over 20 minutes, it ended with a high octave.

The maestros in the banquet hall looked on in appreciation at first but as time passed,

they looked at each other and nodded. They had discovered the hidden meaning in Jun Hyuk's song and had experience a short burst of admiration as well.

When he was done playing, there was not the explosive cheering of a public audience, but the banquet hall rang with genuine clapping.

"So this kind of configuration is also possible."

"Yes. I was fooled at first as well. He's played 8 songs of 3 minutes in a row. Most people would think that it is one song that lasts over 20 minutes."

"Exactly. It's okay to say that the entire performance is one song... and it's okay to separate them. I can't tell if the configuration is good or if he's smart... Geez."

For over 20 minutes, they had not once felt that the performance was cut off. It is a song where they cannot distinguish whether it is one song that was split into eight, or eight songs that were combined into one.

"The more interesting thing is that you can play this on other instruments without arranging it. It's amazing that you can play this music from a piano on a string or wind instrument as well."

"Yes. While he was playing just now, the orchestra members' fingers started moving automatically. They had an impulse to play it on their own instruments. Ha ha."

"I had not expected that a young composer who created a contemporary song like Inferno would show us a such a romantic song with the essence of Chopin."

Jun Hyuk stood up from the piano and lightly bowed his head.

"Jun, what is the title of this song? Is it just a piano ditty?"

Petrenko, who had been known as a great pianist in his youth, showed a lot of interest.

"Well... it's called 'Driver's License'....."

"What? Driver's License? Ha ha. That's plausible."

"Yes. I got my driver's license a little while ago. Honestly, the test was so hard. I trembled during the driving test even though it's really easy once you get used to it....."

“So you captured that experience in music? In beautiful music that is reminiscent of Chopin? That’s innovative.”

Everyone liked that he could bring out music from the minor happenings of daily life. The composers who write songs as though fighting a war have short life spans as musicians. They are forcing the music.

A composer with a style like this can create impressive work, but it is difficult to expect a second piece. On the other hand, the ability to create music from such minor events is a talent that any musician envies. What is more is that if they are able to write a song like ‘Driver’s License’ that even has a beautiful aspect to it, then a musician cannot ask for more.

“Good. Then let’s take a look at Jun as a pianist this time. After all, isn’t he the pianist who trained the winner of the Tchaikovsky Competition?”

Sir Simon Lettle said it as a joke, but people clapped and yelled for an encore.

When Jun Hyuk looked uncomfortable, Patrick Quinn of the Vienna Philharmonic yelled out,

“Look here. Forget about modesty. Modesty and courtesy are not fitting for someone who does music. You need to brag about your talent as much as you want to. That’s what a musician does. Ha ha.”

When Jun Hyuk heard Patrick Quinn’s unexpected words, he burst out laughing.

“Ha ha. I understand. Then I will show off a bit.”

Jun Hyuk sat in front of the piano again, shook his hands a few times, and blinked as though thinking about what to perform next. Then he put his hands on the keys.

The first melody that flowed from the piano is Intermezzo, the most famous of Cavalleria Rusticana by Pietro Mascagni of the Italian opera. It brought out an atmosphere that made it feel as if they were watching a movie about the Italian mafia. Even until then, there was an art of seduction that did not reveal any special aspects with an exact touch and seamlessly flowing octave.

The continuing melody however, was surprisingly the opera’s overture. Everyone doubted it but as soon as the overture ended, it became ‘O Lola ch’hai di larri la

cammissa'. It looked as if he were going to play an entire opera that runs for over 70 minutes.

It is common for pianists to arrange and play the orchestra part of a piano concerto. They even arrange and play one or two great arias. But an entire opera?

Of course this song is a short 70 minutes, a part of the opera, but no one has ever tried to arrange the entire song for the piano to play it.

When the approximately 50 minute performance omitting the opera's dialogue was over, there was only the sound of breathing in the banquet hall.

They are more surprised by something other than the fact that he played a whole opera song. For about 50 minutes, they had sensed the touch of great pianists alive and dead, and the finale had definitely been Jun Hyuk's own touch.

Jun Hyuk took his hands off of the piano and looked happy. For a song that he had just arranged, it had flowed pretty well and he thought that the performance had not been bad. Even though he had put himself into the finale, it had not felt uncomfortable.

All of the people filling the banquet hall were having the same thought. A sanctity of pianists had appeared!

They were not thinking this because of the reappearance of the greats in his playing. He had connected various pianists together with such a natural flow that only piano maniacs would be able to notice the changes.

The opera ends the finale with the great voice of the tenor ringing throughout the theater. The highlight of Jun Hyuk's performance was that he played the piano as if the bass and treble are singing the tenor as a duet.

"Wouldn't this be enough for a donation?"

Jun Hyuk's joking voice was the only sound in the silent banquet hall.

Bravo!!

The maestros and performers in the banquet hall got out of their seats at the same time, clapping and cheering. This is not applause for the performance. This is for Jun Hyuk as a musician.

Chapter 153

The ability to cross between contemporary music, classical, and romantic. A classical pianist who oversteps the abilities of a jazz pianist. They had also heard that he led students in a successful performance of Magic Flute.

They will have to hold back on premature judgments but since he even has the abilities of a conductor, he is a complete and perfect maestro.

“Isn’t this too much showing off? We meant to listen to a few more songs but starting now, I think we’ll need to buy tickets. It’s too much to ask to listen to this for free.”

“Amelia’s interview wasn’t an effort to push for her boyfriend. I see she’s a lucky girl. To think that she receives lessons from a pianist like this everyday!”

“I can see why you aren’t revealing the rest of Inferno. You have so much more to release. Ha ha.”

They started to ask about Jun Hyuk’s short life until now. When he started with music, who taught him, and what his plans for the future are.

“You all are my teachers.”

With this sentence as a start, Jun Hyuk thought them briefly about his rough childhood, his encounter with Yoon Kwang Hun, how Yoon Kwang Hun recognized his talent and allowed Jun Hyuk to fall into the world of music. He also told them how he listened to CDs and soaked in the essence of that music.

Everyone became lost in this story that could be out of a movie and when he was giving his evaluation of an album with a song as one unit, a few maestros were so shocked they could have fainted.

Jun Huk’s evaluation takes into account every single note and melody from each instrument, which is difficult even for them to remember. There is no way to describe Jun Hyuk’s talent but to say that it is a gift from God.

All of the maestros were just thankful that Jun Hyuk who had such a talent was

standing in front of them today. There are a lot of youths who disappear without being able to show their talent. After today however, everyone would be expecting the music that Jun Hyuk has created until now and will be creating in the future.

“It says that Inferno is Symphony No. 1. So how many have you written after that?”

Since they had witnessed Jun Hyuk’s abilities, they could not help but be curious about his past works.

“The most recent symphony I wrote is No. 14.”

“14 songs? What about others? Pieces other than symphonies?”

“I do have sonatas, concertos, and etudes for a few solo instruments.”

“Can you tell us how many songs there are total?”

“There should be a little over 60 songs for classical music. I used to just scratch them out, but I have been controlling myself since I started attending school.”

The person who caught on to Jun Hyuk pointing out classical, spoke out,

“Wait, you said classical? Then you work with other genres as well?”

“Yes. It’s pop music. Like rock, the blues, and jazz.”

“Do you have 60 of those too?”

“No, there are more. It has been easy to create those because the instrumentation is easy and they are shorter. I think there are about 100.”

“Crazy... Didn’t you say that it hasn’t been 4 years since you started music? Are you writing a new song every week?”

“I guess so. If it’s possible, I try to write music every day.”

Three or four songs in a year. They had expected him to write at most 10 songs in a year. 10 is a tremendous number, but to think that he has 14 songs that are just symphonies.

“Why haven’t you released any of your songs? Looking at your 1st sonata, it doesn’t seem like the rest will be rubbish.”

“I have performed a few of them at school concerts. But there isn’t anything that I like enough to reveal to the public yet.”

Everyone started laughing.

“Ha ha ha. Look here, Jun. If you’re thinking of releasing songs that you’re completely content with, you’ll never release a single song.”

This is a mistake that young geniuses make before they go out to the world. They focus on creation until a song that they are satisfied with comes out.

“If you complete a song, you have developed that much. Then how could that song be satisfying? Unless you stop growing... you’ll never create music that you’re completely satisfied with. We’re the same way. I’ve never had a performance that I was completely satisfied with. Something always falls short.”

Jun Hyuk felt like the shortcomings that the maestros were discussing as if they are nothing, was exactly what he experienced. It had felt perfect when he wrote the note on the sheet, but something seemed to be lacking when he looked at the song as a whole. There had been many instances when he felt frustrated because he could not find a breakthrough in this shortcoming.

“Release the songs that you feel are beyond okay. And make sure you show all of the music you make to the world from now on. You can’t always receive praises. You need to hear poignant criticism as well.”

It is a life of creation that is full of the feeling of lacking. Finding out like this, he felt much lighter.

Jun Hyuk forgot how tired he was because they were talking deeply about funny episodes and music. He did not forget to take pictures with everyone either. That night, the party went until dawn.

Two days after the unforgettable party, Jun Hyuk followed Sir Simon Lettle and Sarill Petrenko to Berlin. He watched the Berlin Philharmonic practice and talked to each of the members, spending his time admiring the world’s top class.

Each of the members of the Berlin Philharmonic are good enough to be active as soloists. They are such recognized performers that in the off-season, they configure trios or string quartets to take on full tour schedules.

Since each person is outstanding, the conducting is also different. It is possible to conduct in a way that shows that an orchestra can one perfect instrument.

As long as he does not alter the tempo, they do not need to rehearse repeatedly when given the conductor's interpretation of the song and a few points to pay attention to. The Berlin Philharmonic is always in its best condition.

Conductors also visited other cities in order to see Jun Hyuk. Jun Hyuk was having a great time talking to these people and thinking about how their respectable greats like Bach, Handel, Beethoven, Wagner, and Mendelssohn had an effect on traditional songs.

Chapter 154

The cultural and editorial departments of influential Austrian daily newspaper 'Die Presse' listened to the recorder that a college student had brought them, and they knew that this is a scoop. Even outsiders to classical music become excited about secrets like this.

The recording contains the story of a masterpiece called 'Inferno', a mysterious composer, and world renowned maestros. The only question was whether to put it on the 1st page or to put it in the cultural section.

There are no legal issues either. They had not been tapped and this had happened during a reporter's coverage of an event.

They had not given the informant the amount that he had asked for, but they had given him a fair amount for the value of the file. Culture reporters wrote their articles by looking for word on that day's performance and interviewing a few maestros over the phone.

One week after the concert, 'Die Presse' had a headline that was enough to catch readers' attentions.

[August 1st. Events of that Night; Why did 16 maestros gather in one place?]

[A Korean student at Clayton-Hoffman School of Music, just 19 years old, is the person who made countless maestros rack their brains for about 2 years.

A leading philharmonic in the world made an attempt at his Symphony No. 1 and though they failed, he had the honor to premiere with the Berlin Philharmonic. Of course the person who created this symphony was not revealed until it was performed.

Original composer Jun Hyuk Jang, better known as JUN, released an album with jazz great Stanley Clarke and is winner Amelia LaMarque's boyfriend, who made news in the Moscow Tchaikovsky Competition.]

The daily paper started with an introduction of Jun Hyuk and went on to describe that

night's conversation in detail. Marco Giavelli's opinion on Inferno and the fact that the audience had to leave the concert hall because of the strange topic of pain in particular, caught the readers' attention.

With this article, other media outlets wrote supplementing articles and the world of classical music was flipped upside down. Of the subsequent articles, the phone interview that Patrick Quinn of the Vienna Philharmonic conducted put fire to the wind.

Patrick Quinn said that Jun Hyuk is 'the only person who is able to stand at the top of world music. And that is within 10 years.' This short statement made Jun Hyuk the musician receiving the most attention in the world.

The articles about Jun Hyuk that had started in Austria, soon spread to Germany. The Austrian and German press went to Jun Hyuk's hotel and the Berlin Philharmonic's concert hall to ask to interview and film.

Like poet Byron, he had woken up a star and Jun Hyuk was having trouble adjusting to this environment that had changed overnight.

"Jun, I'm sorry this happened but you'll be eaten alive by the press if you stay here. I wanted to spend some time with you leisurely, but it's a pity."

"I'll say. If I stay here any longer, I'll be a bother to the Berlin Philharmonic."

Everyone was suffering because the reporters camped outside the Berlin Philharmonic concert hall were grabbing all of the members to ask for interviews or about Jun Hyuk's hotel.

"It'll be better for you to hide out until things get quiet. What do you think? Will you spend some time somewhere quiet?"

"Somewhere quiet?"

Sir Simon Lettle thought that it would be best to have Jun Hyuk flee for the time being.

"Yeah. What do you think about staying at my villa? My housekeeper is there and if I give them a call, I can arrange to have someone to do the housework for you. It'll be perfect to rest in because it's in a small village called Hohenschwangau, not far from Bayern Fussen. Neuschwanstein castle is nearby and since the Schwangu forest is right

there, you can take walks to avoid the summer heat.”

Neuschwanstein castle is a sight that Jun Hyuk wanted to see as well. It is so beautiful that Walt Disney used it as a model for the Disneyland castle.

When the articles first went up and the reporters came looking for him, Jun Hyuk had thought of going to Amelia in Budapest.

However, the reporters know his relationship with Amelia and already went to her in Budapest for interviews. Fortunately, Amelia is used to the flashing cameras and ignored the reporters, repeatedly saying ‘no comment’. She gave Jun Hyuk an urgent call telling him not to go to Budapest.

“Fortunately, people don’t know what you look like yet, so no one in such a small village will bother you. What do you think?”

“Would that be okay? I feel like I’m being too much of a bother.....”

For over a week, they had provided him with hospitality. Fleeing to the countryside means that he will be staying for at least one month. Staying in a quiet place is what Jun Hyuk likes most, but he thought it would be obnoxious to accept so quickly.

“It’s okay. This is how much I want to keep you here. Ha ha. I’ll arrange for my plane, so hurry up and run away.”

While Jun Hyuk was borrowing Sir Simon Lettle’s limousine and private plane to go to Hohenschwangau, located 700km from Berlin, Yoon Kwang Hun in Korea still did not know what was going on.



As always, Yoon Kwang Hun finished preparing the cafe to open, sat in the middle of the cafe, and was enjoying coffee and music while waiting for his first customer.

The first customer today was a bit special. The door opened with the sound of a bell, and a white-haired foreigner walked in. Even though it is summer, he is in a suit with a necktie.

After ordering a cup of coffee, he started looking through the CDs on the wall. Yoon

Kwang Hun left him alone because it is a weekday afternoon when there are few customers. If he made a song request, Yoon Kwang Hun even intended to turn it on for him.

The old man looked through the CDs for a while, took one out, went to a cafe employee, and exchanged a few words with him. Yoon Kwang Hun saw the employee point in his direction, and knew that the old man was looking for the owner of the cafe.

Yoon Kwang Hun went to the old man and asked if he wanted to listen to the CD in his hand in fluent English. The old man smiled brightly and gave the CD to Yoon Kwang Hun.

‘I guess this old man knows something about jazz.’

The CD that he chose was the album by Jun Hyuk and Stanley Clarke.

He listened to the full melody of the bass guitar and piano with his eyes closed, tapping his fingers, and then went to Yoon Kwang hun.

“Mr. Kwan Hun Yoon. Do you have time to speak?”

“Excuse me? How do you know me? Sorry, but who are you?”

Yoon Kwang Hun was surprised when the old man called him by his name, and bolted up from his seat. The old man laughed a little and handed over his business card.

Yoon Kwang Hun could tell that the old man was not an ordinary person when he saw the card. He had met tremendously rich people while working on Wall Street. And those rich even have different business cards.

Paper that is sprinkled with a powder of eggshells and ivory, embossed in English font. A material that is nice to the touch, not too slippery but not rough either. This old man has spent thousands of dollars on one box of business cards.

On the business card, it says Stern Corporation. It says Isaac Stern clearly. It does not reveal his position, but his name is the name of the company. There is no need for further explanation.

Yoon Kwang Hun sat across from Isaac Stern. Stern Corporation is a company that he had not heard of on Wall Street.

“Did you come here from New York to meet me? Or?”

“Of course I came here to meet with you. Actually, this is my first visit to Korea as well.”

Yoon Kwang Hun asked cautiously,

“Have you come to meet me? Or have you come to meet me as Jun Hyuk’s guardian?”

“You catch on quickly. Is it because you used to work on Wall Street? Yes. I came to talk to you about Jun.”

If this meeting had been for a deal, Yoon Kwang Hun would have left already. Isaac Stern carefully looked up information on him, but all he had on this old man was his business card.

‘Well this old man is impressive.’

He felt slightly excited because he was meeting someone who made him tense for the first time in a while.

“What would you like to discuss regarding Jun?”

“Stern is a management company. We would of course like to contract Jun as his management.”

Chapter 155

Yoon Kwang Hun just thought that Jun Hyuk's jazz album had become fairly popular in America. He thought he could tell why the old man had picked out Jun Hyuk and Stanley Clarke's jazz album as soon as he came in.

"Then you'll have to meet Jun. Why are you meeting with me?"

"I already met him once."

"Did he reject the offer?"

"No. I wasn't able to bring it up. Jun's piano was so good and that I wasn't in the mood to bring up work."

Isaac Stern did not seem to be lying. That happy smile. He is thinking of the piano performance from that day.

"Even if that's the case, I think this is something that Jun needs to decide."

"Mr. Yoon. Even in America, parents intervene in issues like this. Sports stars who are far past the age of 20 discuss with their parents before signing onto a pro team. Jun won't want to have the decision be completely up to him either."

"But... Mr. Stern..."

"Just call me Isaac."

"Alright. Isaac, it's surprising that you came all the way to Korea to meet me. But Jun is still a student. There isn't anything going on that would require that he has a management company. He just released an album by chance."

Isaac Stern fiddled with his coffee cup. He realized that Yoon Kwang Hun does not know what is going on in Europe.

"Oh dear. I see you don't know yet."

“Excuse me?”

Yoon Kwang Hun thought of what he might be missing on. Did something new happen to Jun Hyuk?

“Jun is already a hot topic in Europe. Articles are coming out in America as well. CNN is probably preparing a report as well. Reporters in Germany or Austria will be chasing him around now.”

“What are you talking about?”

It has already been over 3 weeks since he spoke with Jun Hyuk. He knew that Jun Hyuk was to participate in the Salzburg Summer Festival. He was not contacting him because he assumed that Jun Hyuk would be busy with preparations. Yoon Kwang Hun had also felt annoyed when he was younger and his parents called when he was busy in America.

Isaac Stern explained the article that are circulating Europe. Yoon Kwang Hun quickly looked up the articles on Google and found out what was happening to Jun Hyuk in Europe.

When he heard about the symphony ‘Inferno,’ he knew at once which song it was. It is the song that Yoon Kwang Hun had only seen 3 pages of before shutting it.

“I see. So this happened. Well geez.”

Isaac Stern was confused while looking at Yoon Kwang Hun. Normally, parents become elated in situations like this. Could there be a parent who is not happy for his child when he has become a world renowned star?

However, Yoon Kwang Hun looked far from happy. He even looked as if they had been put in a difficult position.

“You should try calling him. He’ll be very surprised right now.”

“No, it’s okay. He’s not a child... And it’s not like something bad has happened... He’s experienced much worse than this. He needs to handle matters of the press now.”

Isaac Stern liked that Yoon Kwang Hun drew a line where necessary and kept it. He is a great adult.

“You don’t look happy even though Jun, who is like your child, has become a star.”

“Ah, sorry. It’s not really welcome news. I wanted him to be able to have a normal life while studying. Since it is his first time attending school, I wanted him to enjoy a common college life.”

The information that Isaac Stern had received on Yoon Kwang Hun from his company was not wrong in any way. A Korean who had once succeeded in the financial world. Instead of wallowing in anger, he had given everything up to enjoy a normal life. A music fanatic who recognized Jun Hyuk’s talent at first glance. If there is something that Yoon Kwang Hun wants other than to spend the 2nd half of his life with coffee, wine, and music, it is to develop Jun Hyuk’s talent and bring him happiness.

The report had said that in order to convince Yoon Kwang Hun, it is not through money but by showing him that they will support Jun Hyuk to help him find that happiness.

“I really feel it is a pity as well.”

Isaac Stern took a sip of his coffee and his expression became similar to that of Yoon Kwang Hun’s.

“Excuse me?”

“When I met him just a month ago, I had no idea that his name would become so widely known. If I had known, I would have brought up the contract... Ha ha. Since he is a star now, he’ll think that I am an opportunist.”

He is not an ordinary old man. Even his timing in using the truth is appropriate.

“But Isaac, I don’t know anything about your company Stern Corporation. I don’t know its scale...”

“You don’t have to know.”

Isaac Stern did not bring up the matter of money yet and did not talk about the scale of the company. Just by looking at his business card, it is evident that it is not a small-scale company that operates with a few musicians.

“I don’t need to know... Well.”

“Several companies are going to approach you anyway. You can compare the scale of our company then.”

“I guess you’re confident that there isn’t a company that will match up?”

“Not exactly, but we are fairly big in this industry.”

Yoon Kwang Hun silently admired the old gentleman sitting in front of him. The man had researched him and come all the way to Korea. He did not bring a single secretary and took a taxi here alone, as if he were going to convince him by chatting over a cup of coffee.

Yoon Kwang Hun did not want to just turn him away as he had taking a liking to him. He had guessed that something like this would happen one day, and it was just that the day had come sooner than he had expected.

Yoon Kwang Hun spoke seriously,

“Isaac. What do you personally think of Jun Hyuk?”

It is a sudden question, but Isaac Stern responded without hesitation. He knows that from now on, it is the real negotiation.

“A star who has suddenly appeared in the world of classical. It is only normal to be standing with other young stars, but he has been in hiding for a long time. If he decides to come out now, he’ll immediately be on their level.”

“If you do end up managing Jun, what do you intend to do?”

“If Jun agrees to... I would like to stop all activity.”

“What? Halt his activities?”

Yoon Kwang Hun could not hide his surprise at this unexpected response.

“Yes. Activities like concerts and album production.”

“Can you tell me why?”

“What Jun Hyuk is lacking, is experience.”

“Experience?”

“Yes. In my opinion, a little outside push is enough to make Jun create music. His playing the piano? Phew-”

Isaac Stern remembered Jun Hyuk’s performance and whistled.

“It is a perfect performance that does not need further effort.”

“What are you referring to by that experience?”

Yoon Kwang Hun’s heart started beating. He thought that the management company that he had thought of ideal is just in his imagination, but he started to have expectations that this man might be able to keep that for them.

“The intellectual bliss felt from reading a great book. The rapt admiration from looking at a beautiful or innovative work of art. The overwhelming emotion felt from looking at magnificent and mysterious nature. Jun Hyuk needs these kinds of experiences if he is to create greater music.”

Yoon Kwang Hun was genuinely awed by this wise old man. There are a lot of management agencies that coordinate full concert and album production schedules and demand constant activity so as not to lose out on any media opportunities. A management agency is meant to guard a star’s position so they do not lose it. The inherent job of an agency is to manage the fame and money.

Isaac Stern on the other hand, is matching his focus to helping Jun Hyuk create better music. It is the exact response that he had wanted.

“Of course we would like for him to have a lot of personal experiences. Love, the pain of farewells. We could expect nothing more if once he is older, he can experience life in other countries to understand their cultures.”

Yoon Kwang Hun nodded vigorously in agreement. Isaac Stern’s response was of such perfection that even though this is a business discussion, he could not hide his thoughts.

“Isaac. First, I’d like to say that I agree with all of your thoughts. But there is something that you do not yet know.”

“I’m listening.”

Chapter 156

Isaac Stern thought that he had halfway succeeded since Yoon Kwang Hun is about to tell him something new on his own.

“Jun has talent that no one, not even I, can quantify.”

“Yoon, I also know that Jun’s talent is tremendous.”

Isaac Stern leaned forward at Yoon Kwang Hun’s resolute expression.

“Jun is not just a talented composer like Mozart who can produce a song within moments, or an extraordinary pianist like Glenn Gould.”

“Yes, I know that. He’s more than that.”

“No, it’s not that. He’s not at that level.”

Yoon Kwang Hun shook his head. How should he express something he does not know the exact nature of himself? His frustration showed in his face as well.

“He’s... Well. How should I put it?”

Yoon Kwang Hun took a sip of water.

“In my safe, there are already over 60 songs that are just classical music. Of them, there are experimental songs like ‘Inferno,’ but there are also gems that are reminiscent of Beethoven.”

Isaac Stern’s eyes shifted at the mention of the number 60. He knew that Jun Hyuk composed every single day. It is surprising that he has 60 songs already, but if they are comparable to Beethoven, it must mean that they are not ordinary.

“Ah, I heard. You’re the first person who Jun shows his scores to.”

“Yes. It is a gift I am receiving from Jun.”

Isaac Stern saw the frustration leave Yoon Kwang Hun's face for a second to show a smile, and could understand how Jun Hyuk thought of this man.

"Do you know why I am not mentioning money to someone who wants to contract as a management agency? Even if I release those scores in the safe, they will bring in so much money that Stern Corporation will not be able to handle the taxes that Jun has to deal with. Money needs to be the bottom-most article in our contract with an agency."

"Why have you kept those many songs in your safe?"

Isaac Stern was genuinely curious.

"Because of Jun. He is not satisfied with his work yet."

He is a musician who will never know satisfaction. This is a good disposition. Isaac Stern had seen a lot of musicians who in the effort to make a new album, consumed themselves and ended up collapsing. Since his curiosity had been resolved, it is time to rectify Yoon Kwang Hun's misunderstanding.

Isaac Stern spoke carefully,

"There's something you're mistaken about. To worry about taxes, he has to make that much money... but reality isn't like that. Classical music albums don't sell that well these days. Now, it is the world of performers who are led by conductors. Most of the sources of their income come from concerts and CFs. Of course standing conductors do receive great salaries. The certified checks don't come out to much for this album's sales."

It has been a while since classical moved from the world of composers to the world of performers. Music fans still love Beethoven and Mozart. The difference is that they now pay attention to who can perform it better.

There are just 3 of the certified checks that Isaac Stern mentioned. They are Lang Lang, Li Yundi, and Yuja Wang. The common factor is that they are all young Chinese pianists.

Their concerts sell out all over the world even from putting their posters on the wall. They have the tremendous power of China behind them. Chinese people are their source. The second they come out with new albums, the Chinese sell them out.

Due to these circumstances, record labels do not hesitate to release their albums. Since they keep releasing new albums, they grow more as stars. It is the perfect cycle.

“But Jun is Korean. How many classical albums sell in a year in Korea? You are starting at 0 in a basic market.”

Isaac Stern went into a long explanation to bring Yoon Kwang Hun out of his misunderstanding of the current market for classical music. However, the fact that he wants to work with Jun Hyuk means that he has that must trust in Jun Hyuk.

“Jun needs to become a star who oversteps nationality. And I think that is completely possible. Even if that’s the case, he won’t be able to bring in an enormous amount of money.”

However, Yoon Kwang Hun was still shaking his head as he stood up from his seat.

“Wait here a second. It’ll be much easier to understand if you see it than by my trying to tell you.”

Yoon Kwang Hun ran up to the 2nd floor and came back down with his arms full of music scores. It was different seeing the 60 scores bundled together in one place than when he had heard about them. It is a tremendous amount.

“Look through them carefully and let’s talk again.”

Yoon Kwang Hun gave Isaac Stern another cup of coffee and left him there. He is giving Isaac Stern time to look through them by himself to evaluate them.

Isaac Stern could not take his eyes off of the scores until it was long past lunch time. Even though he had been given a slice of cake to hold back his hunger, he did not touch it once.

When Isaac Stern turned the last page of the score, he knew that Yoon Kwang Hun had not been saying what he did because he had a misunderstanding or because he has high expectations. As the report had said, Yoon Kwang Hun is someone who knows how to give an objective and honest assessment.

There are a lot of the experimental songs that he had mentioned. They are scores that bring up strange feelings as though trying to test people. He was not even able to read through all of the 1st part of the song ‘Inferno’ that he had only heard about in the

media.

They bring out different kinds of emotions in people and raise their senses. It is the first time that he realized a score itself could make someone feel emotions as if watching a movie.

Isaac Stern stood up without speaking and walked outside the cafe. Yoon Kwang Hun was surprised and was about to run after him, but he stopped when he saw Isaac Stern light a cigar.

‘Anyone would want to enjoy the aftertaste. He he.’



“I’m sorry.”

It is the first thing Isaac Stern said when he re-entered the cafe.

“It’s okay. I was just a bit surprised when you left without saying anything.”

“No, it’s not that. I am apologizing for not recognizing your assessment of Jun Hyuk’s abilities.”

Isaac Stern gave such a respectful apology, that it was awkward. He had only thought of Jun Hyuk as an extraordinary pianist more than as a composer. After seeing the scores however, he even had the thought that the piano is just a tool for Jun Hyuk in composing.

He picked out a few scores and showed them to Yoon Kwang Hun.

“These aren’t classical.”

“Yes. Jun likes pop music as well.”

“Of the 60 songs you mentioned, how many of them are pop?”

“Ah, you misunderstood me. There are 60 something classical songs. There are more than 100 pop songs. I picked out a few that I like.”

He was shocked. The 1000 that Yoon Kwang Hun had said was not calculated simply

with time. He had come to the result while thinking of Jun Hyuk's abilities.

The Beatles who had introduced a different flow to pop. Led Zeppelin, who opened the door to heavy metal by putting a ton of adrenaline in the blues. Miles Davis who reigned as the witness to jazz history. Kurt Cobain who opened the doors to the 90s.

Isaac Stern looked at the scores and thought that Jun Hyuk would follow similar footsteps to these great achievements. But this is just his thinking. More than that is possible, but Isaac Stern's imagination is up to here.

"So now you understand why I said that it is an ability that we cannot know the depths of?"

"Yes. These scores say it better than any long explanation."

"If you would like to fully convince me for a contract, you'll need to change the direction of your thoughts. I guess you're not just trying to convince me. It is something that is absolutely necessary if you would like to manage Jun."

Yoon Kwang Hun's words are not demands, but a warning. Isaac Stern had no more to say or any more business to do now.

"I'll visit you again. Then, I will show you complete preparations to properly help Jun. Of course... I don't have a lot of confidence. Ha ha."

When Isaac Stern left the cafe, he finally felt his hunger.

Chapter 157

Sir Simon Lettle's villa is to Jun Hyuk's liking. He had felt like it would have been too burdensome to stay in a place like a large European castle. The villa however, is a small 2-story house on a small hill that looks down on the Schwangau forest.

Other than the grand piano in the spacious living room, there was no clutter. There was just the expensive wine in the wine cellar.

The friendly woman who greeted Jun Hyuk is from Eastern Europe, and they could not understand each other. They can just use body language to communicate since she will only be taking care of his meals.

Jun Hyuk organized his luggage and went out into the Schwangau forest. There is just the sound of nature everywhere with nothing to interfere. Since there is such a forest right next to him, he felt like 1 month would go by easily.

Until now, it had been a busy 10 days. With time to relax, he remembered someone he had been forgetting.

"Sir, it's me."

"Yeah. I heard you're a great star now? Ha ha."

Yoon Kwang Hun's pleasant laughter rang over the phone.

"Huh? How did you know? Did the news already come out in Korea?"

"No. It's still quiet here. Didn't I tell you? You're in the palm of my hand."

Sometimes, Jun Hyuk has the feeling that Yoon Kwang Hun might have someone following him around to report back to him. Yoon Kwang Hun will not tell him how he came to know anyway.

"That's that, but where are you now?"

"I'm at Sir Simon Lettle's villa. It's a small countryside village called Hohenschwangau."

“What? Simon Lettle? Simon Lettle of the Berlin Philharmonic?”

This is how Jun Hyuk gets revenge. He imagined Yoon Kwang Hun’s surprised face.

“Yes. Ha ha. Aren’t you jealous?”

Jun Hyuk told him about everything that happened over the last 10 days. The shock he felt when he heard his 1st symphony in the concert hall, the party with 16 maestros, and how he showed off in front of them.

“But how did your score get leaked? There’s no way it came from me.”

“Yeah. I was most curious about that as well... I gave Teacher Jo Hyung Joong my score before. He said that he would find out what it is worth from a professor of music. I never did receive an assessment. There’s nothing other than that though.”

“You did? Hm... I’ll look into it. How is it over there? Is it okay?”

“Yes. It isn’t a luxurious villa, but it’s small and perfect. Oh, you could come here. I’m alone.”

“Hey. Why go over there? I have to run the cafe.”

He does not even care that much about the cafe. There must be another reason why he will not come when Jun Hyuk knows that all Yoon Kwang Hun does is drink coffee and listen to music until it is time to close as if he is a regular customer. It seems he is trying to step by from Jun Hyuk’s life little by little so he can learn to live on his own.

“That’s that, but what are you going to do now? Are you going back to school?”

“Do you think it’ll be okay?”

“How could it be okay when it’s like this? Reporters trying to write about you isn’t even the biggest problem. I’m sure your professors are also going to make a fuss to hand over ‘Inferno’.”

“Damn it. I want to keep going to school.....”

“Why? Is there a lot to learn?”

“It’s pretty good. The special classes are good too.”

“Hm... Then how about this?”

“What?”

“Disappear for about a year. Take a leave of absence from school. Don’t you think everyone will forget after about a year? Just reveal the whole score for ‘Inferno.’”

Yoon Kwang Hun spoke to Jun Hyuk while thinking of what he had just discussed with Isaac Stern. He is still young. It would be okay for him to travel the world for a year.

“There aren’t very many people who know your face. It’s hard for people to differentiate between Asian faces, so I’m pretty sure you won’t face anything too bothersome. I’m positive reporters won’t recognize you even if you were hanging out in the lobby of the New York Times building.”

“Then what do I do for a year?”

“You have to figure that out. You want me to tell you how to rest?”

“I’ll think about it.”

“Sure. Anyway, get a lot of rest since you’re in a good place. Oh right! Send me all of the pictures you took with the maestros. Okay?”

After getting off the phone, Jun Hyuk thought about the idea that no one would recognize him even if he were hanging out in the lobby of the New York Times building. It figures since the only people who know his face precisely are in Korea, school, and the people he met in Salzburg. His name has risen to stardom, but he himself is just an Asian boy.

Everyday, Jun Hyuk walked through the Schwangau forest or went to the morning marketplace with the housekeeper to buy food. Other than the occasional video chats with Amelia and the calls from Sir Simon Lettle to check up on him, he was completely cut off from the outside world.

This peaceful state did not last over 10 days. A phone call came, which made him realize that he cannot push matters off any further.

“Where are you right now?”

“Ah, hello lawyer.”

“Save the greetings for later and tell me where you are.”

“Near Fussen in Germany.”

“Geez... That’s not good since we need to meet immediately.”

“What is it? Did something happen?”

Lawyer Lim So Mi was not speaking in her usual dry voice, but had an excited tone. It is a voice that was not fitting for someone who had always been so calm.

“You need to save me. I can’t live like this. Even now, reporters are camping outside and making a fuss for me to tell them where you live. I can’t leave my house.”

For someone asking to be rescued, her voice was bright. She might be enjoying this attention.

“Oh no... But how did the reporters find out about you?”

“How do you think they know! The only places that are connected to you are CH and LA Sound. The school doesn’t know about me, but LA Sound does. They probably pushed the reporters off to me when they went swarming to their offices.”

“I’m sorry. It happened so suddenly for me as well so...”

“It’s okay. I didn’t call to fight you about it. Anyway, you can’t just ignore it like this. It’s definitely the timing to reveal something or another. And you need to stop by LA Sound.”

“Excuse me?”

“Your tribute album. They finished recording and are going to release the album soon. But I guess the metal musicians with the long hair are saying they need to meet with you. I’m told they’re pretty famous, but I have no idea who they are.”

“Is that so?”

Jun Hyuk had clearly told Alex Zakin that he would not see his heroes in their aged state. By calling him in now with the musicians as an excuse means that they are using this press as an opportunity to garner more attention for the album.

Jun Hyuk hesitated to answer and Lim So Mi realized what he is thinking.

“You can ignore them. The contract clearly says that you won’t participate in promotions for the album. But you’re not some kind of mysterious character... I’m telling you though because I thought it was weird that you created tribute songs but won’t even show your face. If you don’t want to do it, I’ll reject.”

“Yes. Then can you reject it?”

“Okay. Then this talk amongst the reporters... Hm... Jun Hyuk, let’s do this. Think about it for 2 days and then call me. What you need to make a decision on is what you’ll do with the score for the symphony. And what your future plans are. It’s just these 2 things.”

“Alright. I’ll give you a call as soon as I can.”

“And this is good news, but LA Sound is celebrating because you’ve been labeled a young genius in the press. Your album is selling a lot for a jazz record. They also said that there are a lot of pre-orders for the tribute album already. You’re going to make a lot of money very soon. Ho ho.”

When Lim So Mi brought up the matter of money, Jun Hyuk suddenly remembered something. He had come up with plans according to Yoon Kwang Hun’s suggestion to take a year off, but he would need money for those.

“Uh Mrs. Lim. How much have I made until now?”

“What? You don’t know? Lawyer Baek doesn’t tell you?”

“Ah, I don’t ask him. I just use my card and take out cash from an ATM whenever I need it, and he fills it back up to 10 or 20,000 dollars.”

“What? He puts in 10 to 20,000? How much have you made? Hang on. I’ll check for you. I don’t check your account...”

From the sound of typing coming over the phone, he could tell that she is checking his

balances.

Chapter 158

“What... What! You already have a lot of money!”

He could hear Lim So Mi’s short shouting over the phone.

“This is from album sales, these are track revenues... So this is what copyrights are. Performance fees? But... What’s this?”

Lim So Mi was murmuring when she spoke again.

“Jun Hyuk, what’s Violon?”

“Violon? Oh, that’s my friend’s band. There’s some music that I arranged for that band.”

“I see. So that band gives you arranging fees.”

Lim So Mi looked through the history for a while and discovered something new.

“Jun Hyuk. There are investments in the U.S. Treasury and stocks with the money that you made... Did Lawyer Baek do this?”

“I don’t know that kind of stuff. Oh, that’s actually probably from my boss.”

“Who? Your boss? Mr. Yoon Kwang Hun?”

“Yes. He said that he used to be quite successful on Wall Street.”

“No wonder... Lawyer Baek doesn’t know about these things. Oh right. All of it comes to a little over \$3 million. Hey, so you’re rich.”

Jun Hyuk was speechless when he heard that he had \$3 million.

“You earned this much in half a year. You’ll be getting royalties from this new album too... They said that album is going to do even better. This is big. You’ll have to get a tax lawyer first. I’m not on the tax side.”

Jun Hyuk had thought that he had made a couple tens of thousands since jazz is not a genre that sells hundreds of thousands of albums. However, America is taking care of its music distribution.

The more thorough music distribution is, the greater profits there are for the creator and those profits increase taxes. Though there might be measures from the U.S. protecting the creator's interests, it makes sure to scrape out taxes to the last cent.

In these circumstances, royalties come in to Jun Hyuk every time Stanley Clarke performs the songs, and headquarters of large franchises like Starbucks sign contracts to use the tracks.

Jun Hyuk checked how much money he has, went for a walk in the forest, and thought about matters other than music for the first time.

2 days later, Jun Hyuk revealed his intentions to release the rest of the score for 'Inferno' to the 16 maestros. He sent Lim So Mi the information she would give to the press, and he sent messages to Yoon Kwang Hun and Amelia as well.

When he told them that he would get a camping car and travel around Europe for a year, Yoon Kwang Hun started.

"Hey! Won't it be dangerous? Even though it's Europe, I'm iffy about you staying on the street."

"Sir, who am I? I lived on the streets for 10 years since I was young. I'm telling you there's no problem. Ha ha."

Yoon Kwang Hun was at a loss for words. He had not even thought of that and felt like he had said something he should not have. He did feel better that Jun Hyuk talked about that period of his life as if it were nothing.

It could be that Jun Hyuk's wounds from the past have healed and there are now only traces. Yoon Kwang Hun tried to act as if it were nothing and complained,

"Someone is locked up in the cafe, and you're saying you'll be having fun all over Europe? I resent it."

"If you're jealous, do you want to close the cafe and go with me? I have a lot of money. He he."

“Forget it. Kid. A man has to make his own means.”

Amelia also started up, but she had to accept it as she is also tied down with touring.



Lawyer Lim So Mi faced her first ever press conference with excited tension. Most of the reporters in the conference hall are American. She needed to check the mirror several times to make sure that her makeup had turned out well. She could be appearing on TV.

“Hello. I am Catherine Lim, attorney to Jun or full name Jun Hyuk Jang.”

Her voice kept trembling at the cameras that had been flashing ever since she walked into the conference hall. She needs to look at the cameras, but her eyes kept shifting to the side.

“I will talk about what you are most curious about first. We have decided to release the score for Symphony No. 1 in A Major, ‘Inferno’, which was premiered by the Berlin Philharmonic, as soon as possible.”

The cameras flashed again and reporters raised their hands high to ask their questions.

“I will take questions after telling you one more thing.”

Lim So Mi cleared her throat and took the mic again.

“Inferno’s composer, Jun, will be focusing on composing for over a year in a quiet place. He will be taking a year off from Clayton-Hoffman School of Music... and there may be people who already know, but an 80s heavy metal tribute album he produced with LA Sound will be released at the end of this month. Jun composed all of the songs on this album, but he will not be taking part in any of its promotions.”

She had put in a bit of advertising for the album as per LA Sound’s request. As soon as her announcement was over, questions poured in but there was nothing that she could answer to clearly.

“Can you explain the distinction of the song ‘Inferno’?”

“I have never heard Inferno and I have not yet seen the score. Only the Berlin Symphony and a few members of the audience who had been in the Salzburg concert hall on August 1st know the song.”

“To our understanding, Jun only released those 2 albums with LA Sound. Are there plans to release any more?”

“No. As I said, he will be focusing solely on composition for at least 1 year. Ah, I do know that he released a first album in Korea before coming to America.”

“Does he have an exclusive contract with LA Sound?”

“No. Jun has not yet signed on with any record labels or management agencies.”

Lim So Mi ended the press conference with this. She thought that reporters would no longer camp outside her house or ring her phone.”

However, her phone rang incessantly once more. This time, they were professional music publishers asking to meet.

Performers would not be the only people to purchase the score for Inferno, but also people who know how to read scores. No score has ever received such media attention, and tremendous sales were guaranteed. She also received a ton of mail containing similar information.

Lim So Mi had doubted that a score could bring in much money, but was shocked by the amount of advance royalties one publisher offered.

Eventually, she contracted with the publisher that offered the most in advance royalties and people who could not even read music rushed to pre-order the 1st edition. As time passes, the price will increase because of collectors.



When one internet media outlet published articles from foreign press, Yoon Kwang Hun grabbed his clothes.

“I won’t be coming in to the cafe for a while, so don’t slack off and take care of business. And reporters might come swarming in today or tomorrow. If they look for me, tell

them I went to Africa to buy coffee beans. And tell them it'll take a few months."

"Excuse me? Are you really going to Africa?"

The eyes of 2 employees grew large. They are not even coffee importers, but to go to Africa for a cafe?

"Whatever. Just don't play hooky and work hard."

Yoon Kwang Hun glared at the employees, left his car, and headed to the bus terminal. He was going to decide on where to go once he was at the ticket box.

Reporters went to the cafe as Yoon Kwang Hun had expected, but it was all for nothing. They released articles on Jun Hyuk as if at war with each other. Most outlets used foreign articles to cover the internet with obvious but provocative headlines like 'Genius composer recognized by the world' and 'A young world-renowned composer from Korea'.

Thanks to this, Jun Hyuk's album started flying off the shelves again and people gathered to the Taste Room to buy Jun Hyuk's jazz album. The low stock ran out quickly and the impatient people ordered it themselves on Amazon.

The songs in Jun Hyuk's first album dominated music charts again.

Jo Hyung Joong smiled from ear to ear with the news on the album sales and looked through the internet to read every single article on Jun Hyuk.

He could also be certain that the work that all of those maestros abroad were calling impressive was the score that he had seen.

Jo Hyung Joong picked up his phone.

Chapter 159

“Mr. Yoon. This is late, but congratulations. Jun Hyuk is finally being recognized all over the world. Ha ha.”

“Thank you. It’s because of everything you’ve done for us. Oh right, I was going to give you a call anyway.”

“It’s because of Inferno, right?”

“How did you know?”

“Because it said that the source was unknown. Is there anyone else you showed it to?”

“No. I’m still taking care of the original. Jun Hyuk said that he showed it to you.”

“Yes. Jun Hyuk re-wrote it and brought it to me. I scanned it and sent it to a music professor I know. Honestly, it’s just noise when I look at it... Ha ha.”

It is just noise even to Jo Hyung Joong whose job is music. 99% of the people who buy the score will just think of it as noise as well.

“Right? It was uncomfortable and hard for me to look at as well, but to think that it is recognized by maestros... I guess there’s something special to it that average people like us can’t see. Then the score that Jun Hyuk re-wrote for you.....?”

“I still have it. Since it’s handwritten by Jun Hyuk, I’m going to keep it as a family heirloom.”

“Then I guess there’s a high possibility that the leak came from that professor.”

“Yes. I’m sure it’s the music professor I sent it to.”

“What did that professor say when he saw Inferno?”

“That professor must not have been a maestro. He was someone whose standards are not very different from our own. Ha ha.”

Jo Hyung Joong thought of when Professor Ju Yong Tae had criticized it as garbage. As older professors have trouble with their e-mails, assistants and graduate students often help them check their accounts. He thought that it may have been a student who saw the score.

“Then I’ll have to look into it.”

“Oh no, it’s okay. What use is there is finding that out now?”

“No. I need to say something to that professor as well. I’m dying to hear what he has to say. I also want to take this opportunity to see what he’s really like.”

Jo Hyung Joong was having fun imagining the reaction of an elder in classical music who brags impressive prestige.



“Professor. How are you? This is Jo Hyung Joong.”

“Oh, Teacher Jo. Are you doing well?”

He could hear Professor Ju Yong Tae’s calm voice over the phone. He smiled slightly when he thought of how surprised the professor would soon be.

“Yes. I just have something to ask you, professor.”

“Sure. What is it?”

“Did you see the articles that are making news these days? A song called ‘Inferno’. The one that a Korean genius wrote?”

“Of course I know. Isn’t it a song that European maestros are praising highly? I’m also just in waiting for the score to be revealed.”

“As much as it is being praised, there is also negative feedback.”

Professor Ju who is supposed to be opposed to innovative contemporary music is anticipating it because European maestros have praised it? He had given his negative opinion in the strongest terms even when he occasionally heard contemporary music

on broadcast. Had he always been someone with such little conviction?

“Since the opinion is divided, I’ll have to see the score to know. But it’s definitely a work of art if one side is praising it highly and one side is saying that it’s not. If it’s half and half, it’s only a matter of differences in taste or opinion.”

“I see. Oh, Professor. I have one more thing to ask... Do you remember a score I sent you for a symphony written by a rookie about 2 years ago?”

“Of course I remember. That was the first time I’d seen such an unpleasant song.”

“Then do you still have the email that I sent you?”

“No. I deleted it.”

“Did you look at the score on your monitor?”

“No. I printed it, but what is it? Is there a problem?”

Professor Ju Yong Tae started to become annoyed. It sounds as if Jo Hyung Joong is accusing him of something.

“Oh, it’s nothing really. Then that printed score.....?”

“I threw it out of course. I even deleted the email. Why would I hang on to the printout? But why do you keep asking?”

Professor Ju Yong Tae finally asked the question. But Jo Hyung Joong’s voice on the phone had become cold.

“I didn’t think that you would need to wait to see the score for Inferno.”

“What is that? What does that mean?”

“Professor, you were the first person to see the masterpiece called Inferno. The score that you said is garbage and threw out is Inferno.”

There was no sound over the phone. Jo Hyung Joong imagined Professor Ju dropping the phone out of surprise, and hung up the phone.



Jun Hyuk bought a used camping car for \$10,000 and planned his first journey to go in the Bayern area from Wurzburg to Fuissen, and on Romantische Str.

This road created from nature, culture, and history originates from 'The road to Rome' connecting Germany and Rome, Italy. The 360km journey was laden with architecture worth thousands of years of history and the rustic atmosphere of rural farmhouses.

He met Korean tourists in every city who recognized him, forcing him to change his direction into the countryside. They would take pictures of him and post them on social media immediately, bringing more people to the area.

It turned out to be a better choice to change direction into rural areas that are not well-known. There were barely any tourists and he could only see the people of that area living simply within their own fences.

There were even places that looked at him as if seeing an Asian person for the first time. When Jun Hyuk stumbled with his German however, they let down their guards and treated him with a friendly manner.

Jun Hyuk visited each village that the European maestros told him about in order to learn the folk songs of each area. A camping car is good because he can stay somewhere even if the area does not have accommodation for outsiders.

Of the people that Jun Hyuk met, he spent the most time with gypsies. These nomadic Aryan Indian people are called the Romany people.

Most of them have settled, but there are the rare people who still live in place to place. Their freedom and optimism held Jun Hyuk back.

Bizet's Carmen is a thing of the past. Gypsies do not make their living off of music, dance, and prostitution, but live off of the subsidies net by the government for minority protection.

They played a quaint melody for Jun Hyuk that they did not know the origins of, and Jun Hyuk committed that melody to his memory. He then created a new song with that melody as a background and played it for them.

He felt like living with music in this optimism is another good way of living.

When he left Germany and found the Route 4 Lucerne line in Swiss Zurich, it was his treasure. The green fields and lake that kept disappearing and reappearing were a superb view that exceeded any tourist attraction.

He did not even have a place to hurry up and get to. Jun Hyuk stopped the car whenever he wanted to. He spent the nights enjoying the dark, calm nights lit up by the stars reflected on the lake.

It was people who interfered with this calm from nature. They must have thought that no one was around because Jun Hyuk turned off all the lights in the camping car, so an SUV turned up near him with speakers turned up to the maximum volume.

As even the sounds of nature grew quiet because of the loud noise, the only sound in the area was that of the music from the car.

He was angry and annoyed, but he could not get himself to approach them. He was scared that they could be a danger to him.

Jun Hyuk was lying down in the camping car for about 5 minutes after the SUV arrived when he got up all of a sudden. He put his clothes on and walked toward the car with the music.

It seemed that there were 4 men in the SUV, preparing to camp out. They already had sleeping bags laid out on the ground and they had brought dry wood to create a fire.

When Jun Hyuk appeared suddenly, the 4 men picked up the wood that they were going to use for the fire. They were equally scared, but they put the sticks down when they saw that Jun Hyuk was alone.

“Excuse me, but that music.....”

“Oh, sorry. We didn’t realize that we had neighbors. It was too noisy, wasn’t it?”

When they heard Jun Hyuk speaking German with difficulty, one of the men rushed to turn the volume down.

“No, it’s not that... That music, is it the radio? A CD?”

“CD.”

“Can I see the CD jacket?”

The men were taken aback because Jun Hyuk had appeared like a ghost to ask to see the CD.

“Look here. Is your German not good? Can you speak English?”

Someone spoke in English, though it was British English which sounded like German to him anyway.

“What a relief. English is okay. Can we speak in English?”

“Of course.”

The man who spoke with an English accent retrieved the CD case from the car and handed it to Jun Hyuk.

Chapter 160

The music that they are listening to is the tribute album that Jun Hyuk wrote. Disappointment came first when he saw the list of artists who had participated. It is true that top stars had participated, but they are people who are popular for their performances rather than their playing or singing skills. The only person who satisfied Jun Hyuk was Vivian Campbell who was once Ronny James Dio's guitarist.

However, the music he had just heard is not the guitar sound that he had been expecting. It was not a rough and hard guitar, but the blues. When he first heard the music in his camping car, he had thought that it was not his music. He had come running because the theme tune was the same. Whether it was the guitarist or producer, there is no doubt that the song had been arranged.

When Jun Hyuk was frowning while reading the CD, someone threw him a can of beer.

"Look here. Let's introduce ourselves even if we're only neighbors for a night."

"Oh, sorry. I'm Jun. Korean."

"Korean? Are you on vacation?"

"Yeah. And you?"

"Ah, I'm Todd, a guitarist. The four of us are a band. Though we're nameless. Ha ha."

"I see. Then all of that on the car roof is all instruments?"

"Yeah. You liked this music? Or because it's noisy?"

"Both. But it's not like I liked the music that much."

"What? It's the first great album in a while, but you don't like it? This was created by gathering together stars from the past!"

Guitarist Todd had thought that Jun Hyuk was a fan because he had suddenly appeared to look at the CD jacket so carefully. When he said that he did not like the music

however, Todd launched an impassioned speech to counter it.

Jun Hyuk was dragged next to Todd and had to listen to why this album is a great album.

“Look here, my Korean friend. We’ll spend the night up if you stay next to Todd. Hurry up and run away.”

The other band members must have heard Todd’s impassioned speech several times because they shook their heads and headed to the car or sleeping bags to go to sleep.

Todd did not listen to his band mates and took an acoustic guitar out of the trunk.

“Alright, listen to this. Vivian Campbell is a completely different guitarist now that she was before. If this had been when she was young...”

Todd played the song’s guitar solo with variations that are a bit more rough.

“Now she’s middle-aged and totally into the blues. That’s why she played it like this instead.”

This time, he played it exactly like the song on the CD. When Jun Hyuk’s eyes widened, Todd looked elated.

“What do you think? Can you see the difference?”

The first time Todd played had been Jun Hyuk’s original version. He had not played according to the score, but he had brought out the exact emotion that Jun Hyuk had intended for.

“But how did you play the guitar of Vivian Campbell when she was young?”

“Well that’s because all metal bands at the time were like this. You can tell when you see the album. The composer Jun said that he created the songs for the metal heros of the 80s. If you look at the flow of the entire song, it needs to be played the way I did. The way it’s played now does seem a bit different.”

“You... have great sense. You can look at the flow of an entire song and find the guitar’s variation.”

Jun Hyuk was genuinely in awe.

“Hey – you know a little something. You can tell I have great senses after listening to just one of my guitar measures, when my band mates don’t even know. Damn it.”

Todd clucked his tongue and glared at the members of his band sleeping in the car.

“Todd, play a guitar song. Let’s hear those great senses.”

“Okay. Listen well. It’s the moment you become my fan.”

Todd played Randy Rose’s classic guitar instrumental ‘Dee’ splendidly. For a short 51 seconds, the guitar echoed with the sound of the lake and fall wind as an accompaniment.

Jun Hyuk thought that there were as many talented musicians in the world as there are grains of sand. He even thought that he is lucky to have made his own talent known to the world in the midst of all of these other musicians.

Jun Hyuk clapped quietly and stood up.

“Listen carefully, Todd. You won’t be nameless one day. I’m sure of it. There’s no way someone who plays the guitar like this, can remain nameless.”

Jun Hyuk put out his hand for a handshake and turned around.

“Hang on.”

Todd stopped Jun Hyuk and grabbed a pen from the car. He quickly wrote something on Jun Hyuk’s palm.

“This is my Twitter. Let’s keep in touch.”

Jun Hyuk waved his hand and returned to the camping car.

“What am I supposed to do when this kid writes on my hand with a permanent marker?”

Jun Hyuk grumbled while washing his hand for a while in the sink before going to sleep.

He kept traveling while creating small memories with the people he met on the road. But Jun Hyuk had to end these good times before 2 months had passed.



Controversy was triggered with the news that Patrick Quinn was appointed guest conductor of Vienna Philharmonic this season.

After the entire score for *Inferno* was revealed, Patrick Quinn was overambitious in his decision to become the first person to perform it, and when the season's schedule became a mess, the orchestra members chose to boycott. They can have interest because it is a revolutionary song, but there is no reason for the Vienna Philharmonic to perform it out of revenge.

Patrick Quinn revealed his intention to resign when his relationship with the members worsened, and the Board of Directors announced that they are selecting a new guest conductor.

There were also positive moves. As sales for the *Inferno* score closed in on bestseller novels, record labels were quickest to make moves.

EMI's Warner Classic, Deutsche Grammophone and DECCA's Universal Classic, and RCA's Sony Classic could expect record-breaking sales for *Inferno* records. They were offering orchestras tremendous amounts of money to urge them to record.

A few orchestras made attempts but failed and even tried to record each instrument in separate parts, but there was no smooth conductor to bring out a quality worthy of this song's value. The songs that were recorded with a few outstanding people were assessed as just noise, and album sales were canceled.

One critic said that something needs to come out of *Inferno* for this overheating of the current classical world to settle, whether it is a record or a Blu-Ray of the performance.

He also said that because a modern bait had been cast in the world of classical that has been feeding off of relics until now, it needs to be eaten away in order to make everyone settle down.

When Jun Hyuk left Swiss and entered Italy, he heard about Patrick Quinn's resignation. When he found out that it is because of his own song, he was in disbelief.

Inferno is a song that he wrote in his immature youth. He even found it laughable that there was such a fuss over this song that repelled some people when there are a lot of songs that are much more refined.

However, it was difficult for him to hide this apologetic feeling to a maestro who had shown his such goodwill. He hesitated before picking up his phone.

“Maestro Quinn. This is Jun.”

“Oh, Jun. How long has it been? I’ve been hearing news about you. So you’re traveling where people can’t see you? How is it? Is it good?”

Patrick Quinn’s voice was bright for someone who had been fired.

“Yes. Uh... I just heard the news. Because of my song that’s really nothing...”

“What are you talking about! What do you mean it’s nothing? And since it’s not because of you, don’t say that. My opinions and those of the Vienna Philharmonic were so different that we could not work together any longer.”

“I see. I was being arrogant.”

Chapter 161

The media that believed that one of the top conductors in the world would quit an orchestra because of one song and Jun Hyuk who believed it became laughable.

Money and their view on music were the factors that split up the conductor and orchestra. The Philharmonic is too large to fight over one song.

“That’s that. Isn’t it around time that your traveling will become boring?”

“No. It’s so good I could do this for 10 years.”

“Really?”

He showed a little disappointment when Jun Hyuk said that he likes it.

“Is something going on?”

“I wanted to go to America with you.”

“America?”

“Yeah. I accepted an offer from the Boston Philharmonic.”

“Oh, then are you going to be Boston’s maestro?”

“Ha ha. Why? You thought I would have been out of a job? As soon as the article saying I left the Vienna Philharmonic went out, I got over 10 calls with invitations. I’m that good.”

“Ha ha. I see. So is Boston your final choice?”

Boston Philharmonic is in the fall season with regular performances from December to May. There is also a short summer season called Tanglewood that runs from July to the beginning of August.

Tanglewood, or Tanglewood Music Festival, is one of the largest music festivals in New

England along with the Newport Jazz Festival. Located 2 hours to the west of Boston, Tanglewood is in Lenox where author Hawthorne of 'The Scarlet Letter' wrote 'Tanglewood Tales'.

In 1936, the Boston Symphony Orchestra opened its first performance on a hill with a small and shabby house. In 1940, Russia conductor and composer, and contrabass player Serge Koussevitzky established a music summer camp for 300 young musicians. That was the beginning of today's Tanglewood Music Festival.

The zest that can only be experienced at the Tanglewood Music Festival is of listening to world class music while surrounded by beautiful nature. Finding a comfortable and appropriate shaded area to lie on the grass while listening to the classical melody brings a different kind of emotion and awe.

Patrick Quinn had become the maestro leading the Boston Philharmonic starting in the beginning of August, once the summer season has ended.

"Yeah. Boston is the only place that accepted my condition."

"Condition?"

"Performing Inferno. If performing it is hard, then recording an album. That was my first request, and Boston accepted it without another word."

Along with New York, Chicago, Cleveland, and Philadelphia, they are the 5 orchestras of America called the 'Big Five'. The Boston Philharmonic has an audience of all ages because the citizens of Boston have great interest in the orchestra and there is a high ratio of students in the city.

Due to the young audience, there were a lot of experimental performances and they released a lot of contemporary music albums. Since 2009, they even have their own record label called the 'BSO (Boston Symphony Orchestra) Classics' that releases records and has a digital track download system.

The Boston Philharmonic was expecting a record of Inferno to become a big shot. The Boston Philharmonic and Patrick Quinn's understanding had fit exactly.

"Do you have a second condition? Like an incredible salary. Ha ha."

"Of course there's a second. That's not money but you, Jun."

“Excuse me? Me?”

“Yeah. The condition was that you could conduct the performance or recording of Inferno. What do you think? Don’t you want to give up your travels? Ha ha ha.”

Jun Hyuk did not understand what Patrick Quinn meant exactly. Could it be?

“Jun, I would like to perform this song no matter what. But what I want more is to hear it.”

“You want to hear it?”

“Yeah. Not imagining the song while reading the score, but it’s music that I want to hear for myself. That’s why my second condition was you. So I could listen to it.”

Patrick Quinn is saying that he would lend Jun Hyuk the luxury instrument, the Boston Philharmonic, to perform the song himself.

“What do you think? Would you want to fulfill my ambition?”

How does he need to respond? Patrick Quinn’s suggestion shook Jun Hyuk up.

“Take your time to think about it. Since the season begins in December, think about it until then.”

His hesitation meant that Jun Hyuk was already leaning towards doing it. Patrick Quinn thought that it would not be long before he could hear Inferno with his own ears.

Life is a series of choices. After enjoying fall in beautiful Europe and going into winter, he was thinking of going down south. He wanted to go to warm southern Italy and take in the Mediterranean wind to see the Italian opera’s unrealistic true background.

But.....

Conducting the Boston Symphony. And traveling the Mediterranean as a symbol of freedom. There is of course Amelia as well.

He was going to make the decision all on his own.

He could start traveling again later. The opportunity to conduct the Boston Philharmonic disappears the moment someone releases a record of Inferno. And there is something that people still do not know. If he adds all of that together, now is his chance.

But it is possible that the Boston Philharmonic is unable to perform Inferno. When Jun Hyuk thought that it may be impossible to perform the song, he thought about whether they would be able to release a record.

Surprisingly, choosing is not hard. Choosing is only difficult when someone has trouble finding determination. Determination is easy with courage as well.

Jun Hyuk took out his cellphone.

“Maestro Quinn. I’ll meet you in Boston.”

Jun Hyuk turned the camping car around and headed back in the direction of Zurich. He sold the camping car for nothing and got on a plane to Boston.

Jun Hyuk really was not a star. No one knew his name. The stars were ‘Inferno’ the song and Jun the name. No one recognized him when he bought his airline ticket, got his boarding pass, or when he went through procedures for coming and going.

When using the name ‘Jun Hyuk Jang’, he is just a young Asian boy.

When he arrived at General Edward Lawrence Logan International Airport in Boston, a woman in her mid-30s, wearing a dress, was waiting for him.

She must have used the photo on Patrick Quinn’s to learn his face because she raised her hand as soon as she saw him.

“Maestro Jun. I’m Tara Butters of the Boston Philharmonic. Call me Tara.”

“Excuse me? Maestro? I can’t handle that. Just call me Jun.”

“No, I can’t do that. You are a guest conductor for the Boston Philharmonic. Anyway, I don’t know how long it will be for but I am going to act as your secretary while you are here. It’s an honor. Please let me know if you need anything.”

There was a limousine waiting outside the airport.

“Shall we go to the hotel? We have made reservations for you at the Plaza Hotel. We can move you somewhere else if you find anything uncomfortable, so just tell me.”

Do maestros always receive such treatment? He could not tell if it was out of genuine admiration or firmly placed custom, but he did not think he could ever get used to it.

“No, let’s go to the hotel later. I’d like to meet Maestro Patrick Quinn first.”

“Alright. Then we’ll be going to Boston Symphony Hall.”

If Tara Butters had acted less like a secretary, they would have been able to have a conversation in the limousine. But Jun Hyuk completely shut his mouth and looked at Boston out the window.

“Um, Maestro. Can you take a look at this?”

“What is this?”

“A contract. I know you have a secretary, but don’t know her contact information. Look over it and if you give me her information, I’ll take care of it. It is the standard contract for visiting conductors with Boston Philharmonic. I will go over the details with your lawyer.”

“Alright. This is her phone number.”

Jun Hyuk found Lim So Mi’s number in his phone and handed it over to Tara.

Tara jotted the number down and pressed a few keys on the phone before handing it back.

“I saved my number as well. Call me at anytime if you need anything.”

“Oh, okay.”

Jun Hyuk could not shake the feeling that he might be bothered a lot by this woman named Tara from now on.

The Boston Symphony Hall, completed in 1900, is an impressive building reminiscent of European architecture and was selected as a National Historic Landmark. It is famous not just for the exterior, but as the concert hall with the best sound conditions

in the world.

He shook when he entered this historical building for the first time. He is not a tourist or someone here to see a concert. He is here as a performer to stand on the stage, and to conduct the orchestra at that.

“Maestro Jun. Maestro Quinn is in rehearsal at the moment. He told us to go straight to the concert hall. What would you like to do?”

This woman’s timing is on point. She even takes away the time that he can stand back to be in awe. His shaking halted completely.

When they entered the main concert hall, they could see Patrick Quinn conducting a Tchaikovsky piece on stage.

He saw Jun Hyuk, put the baton down, and hugged him.

“Oh! My friend, Jun. Welcome. Do you know how much I’ve been waiting?”

Past Patrick Quinn’s shoulder, Jun Hyuk could see over 90 orchestra members looking at him.



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